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Fillmore in the '70s

A donut shop was the hangout

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■ FIRST PERSON

Peet's Saved My Life

Sometimes destiny provides the relief

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ AUGUST 2018

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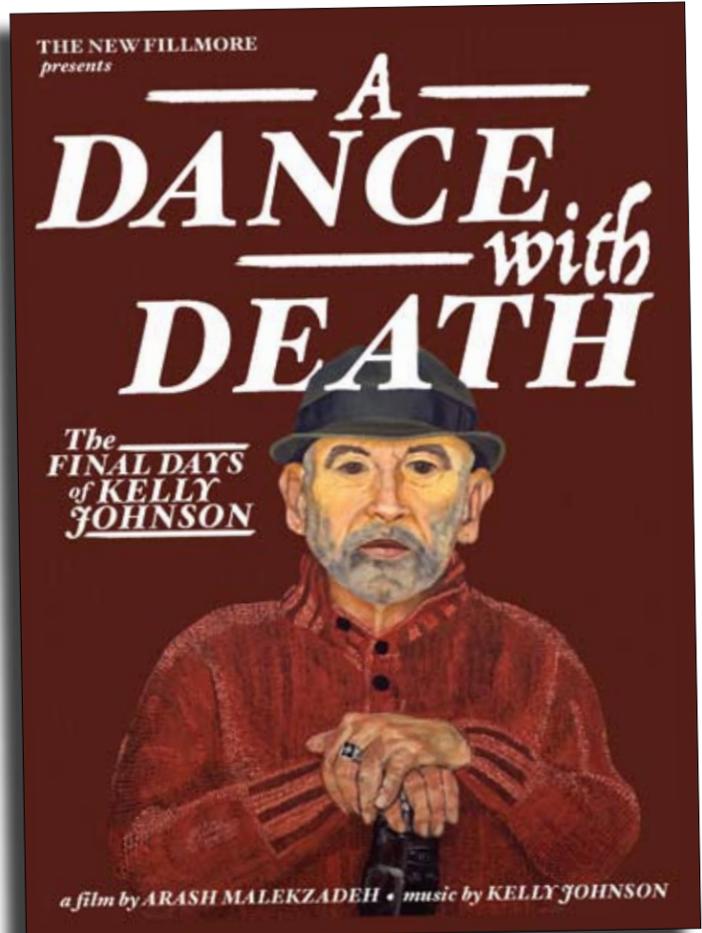
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FILM PREMIERE



A new California law gave Fillmore fixture Kelly Johnson the option to end his life as he wished. He took it.

A Film by Arash Malekzadeh
Music by Kelly Johnson

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE NEW FILLMORE
Thomas Reynolds, Executive Producer
Filmed on location on Fillmore Street earlier this year.

Premiering at the **Clay Theatre** at 2261 Fillmore
Wednesday, August 15, 2018, at 7 p.m.

followed by a Q&A discussion with filmmaker Arash Malekzadeh and Kelly Johnson's daughter Leda Meredith

Vocalist Kim Nalley and pianist Tammy Hall will perform.

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Advertising inquiries ads@newfillmore.com or 415.441.6070
Published on the first weekend of each month. Deadline: 20th of prior month
Subscriptions by mail are available for \$30 per year. Please send a check.

Connecting the neighborhood

Every month, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore circulate to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and welcome your ideas and suggestions.



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Popping Up for the SUMMER

POPPING UP at 2053 Fillmore — where other shops have popped up and down recently — is Modern Citizen, a women's clothing boutique with a business model that sheds light on the current state of retail in the neighborhood.

"We're a San Francisco born and raised company," says store director Rian Minnifield, who describes the company's mission as offering "real, beautiful pieces you can live and work in that empower you to make moves."

She adds a twist seldom uttered by new Fillmore boutiques these days: "We want to offer fashion for women here that's priced in the mid-range — so you don't feel like you're breaking the bank." Well-made dresses and the revived jumpsuit hover around \$100; interesting tees go for \$42; delicate necklaces from \$45 to \$198. There's also an offering of hair accessories and home and beauty products, though the in-store selection is limited.

The new Fillmore location will then pop down on October 1, when Modern Citizen plans to pack up and move down the hill to launch its first full-fledged brick and mortar location — now called an "offline shop" — on Union Street at Buchanan. The company has already tested the retail waters with an earlier pop-up on Union Street two doors down.

Co-founder Jess Lee — a veteran of the Gap who helped hone business development strategies for the websites of Banana Republic, Piper Lime and Athleta — originally launched the company in 2014 as a "by women, for women," e-commerce-only business.



Modern Citizen has opened a two-month pop-up at 2053 Fillmore.

She and co-founder Lizzie Agnew are now marketing Modern Citizen fashions in new-fashioned ways.

Along with its e-commerce channel, the company has promoted its brand through Desk to Dinner in-office pop-ups, which set up a Modern Citizen shop at local businesses such as Facebook, Sephora and Twitter so that potential customers can try on the goods during the workday.

Modern Citizen also offers a "personalized styling program" that lets shoppers request five items to try on at home, keeping and paying only for the ones that pass muster and returning the rest.

CPMC Is Scaling Back Its Local Plans

CONTRARY TO earlier plans, California Pacific Medical Center now says it will scale back its operations in the neighborhood when a new state-of-the-art hospital opens next year on Van Ness Avenue.

Patients are expected to move into the new hospital in early March. The current hospital will then concentrate on ambulatory care for patients who do not require overnight hospitalization. That will bring a reduction from 2,100 to fewer than 500 employees at the existing hospital on Buchanan Street, administrators say, and an expected 30 percent reduction in the number of people who visit the current complex. There will be fewer doctors, too, and the emergency room will move to the new hospital.

Earlier plans had called for an expansion of facilities in the neighborhood, including a new building for ambulatory care on Sacramento Street, where the aging Stanford building now stands, and a new parking garage.

No more. "No new construction is planned," said Ameet Nanda, a hospital administrator. "We've scaled back our plans."

After the new Van Ness building opens, the hospital will close its facilities out on California Street, near Laurel Village. Some of those operations, including women's health and breast cancer specialists, will move to 2333 Buchanan, along with some outpatient surgery. But the fourth, fifth and sixth floors of the current hospital will be left empty, administrators said.

Neighbors who attended a community hearing at the hospital on July 11 were skeptical that hospital administrators were telling the full story. "To think that three floors of prime property in this neighborhood are going to be left empty defies belief," said one.

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Auto Burglary
Divisadero and Hayes
June 11, 1 p.m.

A witness saw two men breaking into a car and called the police. Officers obtained video surveillance footage from a nearby business and were able to identify one of the suspects. Two days later, the street crimes unit searched an area the man was known to frequent and found him on the 300 block of Haight Street. He was booked for auto burglary and conspiracy.

Attempted Robbery
Octavia and Union
June 14, 3:44 p.m.

A woman was sitting on a sidewalk bench when a man approached her, seized her iPad and began struggling with her. During the struggle the suspect shouted, "Give me your fucking iPad!" Officers of the street crimes unit passing by in a patrol car stopped and took the assailant into custody. He was booked for attempted robbery and for making threats, a felony offense.

Robbery, Assault
Fillmore and Sutter
June 14, 11:31 p.m.

A man believed to be approximately 20 years old stole a bag that contained a laptop belonging to another man who was standing near the corner of Fillmore and Sutter Streets. When the owner of the laptop confronted the suspect, the man punched him and fled east on Sutter. Police are investigating the matter.

Shoplifting
Geary and Steiner
June 25, 3 p.m.

A man entered the Safeway store, pried open a glass cabinet, damaging it in the process, and stole an expensive cosmetic item. Security guards called the police, but the officers were not able to apprehend the suspect. They added his description to the crime bulletin. A week later, officers in the Tenderloin District recognized the man and arrested him. He was booked for shoplifting.

Robbery
Fillmore and McAllister
June 25, 10:15 p.m.

Three young men approached a woman and a man aboard a Muni bus and took their cell phones. Both the woman and man jumped off the bus and gave chase. The robbers dropped both phones and fled, and the two were able to recover their property. Police have no suspects.

Assault
Oak and Buchanan
June 27, 7:50 p.m.

A man sitting inside a Toyota Prius was

An unwitting witness to a crime

I was walking to the Walgreens at Fillmore and Bush when I heard running footsteps behind me. It was 4:25 in the afternoon on the Fourth of July.

I turned to see a group of young people, perhaps 20 or more, bolting up the hill. As they surged past me, one knocked me aside and I fell against the building. No one paused, though one of the bunch glanced back at me with an almost apologetic look. Then the group tacked left in a flock and burst into Walgreens. I entered right behind them.

Inside, it seemed a scene from a movie. The kids were working the hair and dental products, toppling merchandise from the shelves into cloth bags, laughing and moving quickly down the aisle. The more expensive items were out of their reach, locked up behind clear plastic shields. The thieves seemed content to load up on the cheaper merchandise.

They ranged in age from about 10 to 25. The youngest boy in the bunch took the sentry's position by the front door. He grinned at the employees behind the registers, picked through items a shopper had left behind in a returned basket, then tossed them back. Apparently they were not worth stealing.

Walgreens employees were taking it all in stride. Two were calmly filming the melee on their phones. After about three minutes, the youths swept out in a mass, leaving behind heaps of fallen merchandise in the aisle for store employees to pick up and put back on the shelves. A woman behind a register saw my incredulous look and said: "This happens every day. The police will come, but not right away."

I asked her what would happen then. "They'll say they can't do anything," she said.

Someone had called 911 the moment the young thieves had swarmed into the store. I hung around for about 15 minutes afterward, dazedly carrying out a haphazard mix of finishing my shopping and helping clean up. As the editor responsible for compiling the monthly Crime Watch report in the *New Fillmore*, I was slowly processing the fact that I had been swept up in one of my own crime reports.

No officers had yet arrived. Employees had left their tasks to clean up the mess. The line at the registers grew longer.

— DONNA GILLESPIE

arguing with a woman on the sidewalk when the man hurled a pair of scissors at her, striking her in the face. The woman called the police. The suspect was arrested at the scene for assault with a deadly weapon. The woman, whose injury was not life-threatening, was transported to the hospital.

Robbery
Buchanan and Ivy
July 3, 12 p.m.

A woman was walking her dog when a man approached and asked to see her phone. A second man was standing behind her. When she refused to hand over the phone, the first suspect raised his arm as though to strike her. She then complied. The two suspects were described as 18 years old. Police have no suspects at this time.

Car Burglary
Palace of Fine Arts
July 5, 2 p.m.

Police spotted a vehicle driven by a suspect who had been involved in a car burglary the day before. They followed the car through various areas known to be "hot spots" for car burglars until the vehicle stopped at the Palace of Fine Arts. There the officers took positions to conduct surveillance. Two officers saw the suspect break into a parked car. He fled before the officers were able to make an arrest. Later

the same day, officers from Northern Station found the suspect walking on Market Street, detained him and discovered that he was carrying stolen items from the auto burglary. He was arrested and his car was towed.

Robbery
Steiner and Bush
July 5, 11:37 p.m.

A woman was walking her dog when a man tackled her. She struggled, but he snatched her cell phone and fled on foot. The robber was described as about 20 years old. Police are investigating the matter.

Attempted Robbery, Assault
Gough and Elm
July 7, 6:40 a.m.

A woman was approached by a man who threatened her with a broken bottle, then demanded her money. Before the woman could respond, he cut her on the arm with the bottle, then fled south on Gough Street. She was hospitalized with non-life-threatening wounds. No arrests have been made.

Animal Cruelty
Oak and Lyon
July 7, 9 a.m.

Officers on patrol observed a van parked on the street that appeared to have people living inside. The police ran a computer

check on the van's license plate and learned it was not registered. In addition, its 2018 registration sticker did not correspond to the van's license plate.

They investigated the vehicle and found no current occupant, only a dog cowering inside. The dog had no water. One window was completely closed, and the other was open about 1/8 of an inch, insufficient for properly ventilating a vehicle. The officers attempted to gain access to the vehicle, but both front door handles were broken, and a large metal shelf was attached to the rear hitch of the van. A trunk was chained to it, blocking entry to the rear door. The officers managed to maneuver the trunk so that they had enough clearance to access the rear door.

Once inside, they were confronted with a wall of personal debris, including clothes and boxes. They dug a hole large enough for the dog to crawl through. Once the dog was freed, officers transported it to Animal Care and Control for medical treatment, then towed the van.

Robbery
Geary and Webster
July 10, 1:10 p.m.

A woman was waiting for the Muni bus when a man who was 19 or 20 years old snatched her cellphone from her hand. As she fought with the man, he struck her in the head with his fist and shoved her to the ground. He fled down Webster Street. The woman suffered a laceration to the head. When police arrived, they transported her to a hospital. Police have no suspects.

Possession of a Firearm,
Parole Violation, Resisting Arrest
Sutter and Broderick
July 14, 3:49 p.m.

Officers stopped a car that had no license plates. The driver was on parole, so the officers had cause to search his car. They found a loaded pistol with a high capacity magazine. Police checked their records and discovered the pistol had been stolen. One passenger was in the car; he was booked at county jail for possession of a concealed firearm. The driver was booked for parole violation and resisting arrest.

Robbery
Geary and Scott
July 16, 8:22 p.m.

A woman riding a Muni bus was approached by a man who was about 18 to 22 years old. He snatched her cell phone, jumped off the bus and ran. No arrest has been made, and police encourage anyone who has any information about this incident to contact the SFPD through the department's anonymous tip line at 415-575-4444, or text TIP411, with "SFPD" at the start of the message.

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The Latest City Haul

By CHRIS BARNETT

AT LEAST FOUR Fillmore cafes and restaurants have been visited by an “incredibly rude” City Hall inspector scrambling to collect fees for sidewalk dining after years of bureaucratic bungling. It seems the latest city haul comes after several years of failing to invoice merchants for the permit fees — averaging \$500 to \$600 annually — to put tables and chairs outside for the pleasure of *al fresco* diners and others who want to sip and schmooze in the sunshine or sit with their dogs.

“Now we’re getting permit expiration notices and we have to go through all the trouble of re-applying for a permit — and at a higher fee,” according to one local. Adds another: “Look, we don’t expect (the sidewalk space) free, but the arrogance, ineptitude and rudeness of this city today and some of its departmental inspectors is out of control.” No one would speak for attribution, fearing reprisals.

AU REVOIR, LILITH: The upmarket French-owned fashion boutique **LILITH** didn’t just suddenly bail out of its 2029 Fillmore storefront over a lease squabble. Neighboring merchants say the entire chain has folded. Lilith’s phones in S.F. and New York still have recordings, but messages go unanswered. Cushman & Wakefield’s retail leasing broker and Fillmore Street dealmaking doyenne **PAM MENDELSON** is showing the space, but says there’s no new tenant yet.

RE-FRESCA: Fillmore Street’s popular, pioneering Peruvian restaurant **FRESCA** will indeed re-open with a full remodel at some point, according to the owner of the building. Fresca has a new 10-year lease and is submitting its design plan for approval and permitting. . . . Vacant for months, the two prime storefronts around the corner on California Street that long housed the **VINO** wine shop and **KURAYA** Japanese antiques are finally coming back to life. Reportedly a heavyweight real estate firm is combining both spaces. Now the owner, the Carolyn Louise Leach Trust, has posted a notice of nonresponsibility, indicating action is finally afoot. . . . Still no life, though, at the long-shuttered **LA BOULANGE** at 2043 Fillmore, where the distinctive blue paint continues to peel.

THE SALOON BEAT: Warm as an Austrian Alps hunting lodge, richly outfitted in dark wood, leather, brass and glass, **PALMER’S TAVERN** at 2298 Fillmore has in the past chilled some with its uneven food and service and its fratboy atmosphere. But on the saloon side of the house, things have changed. Its 4 to 6 p.m. happy hour — seven days a week, no less — is now commandeered by head barman **DOUG BRYSON**, razor sharp in his white shirt, black vest and tie. Bryson recently delivered two precision-poured-to-the-rim straight-up cocktails with a smile, smart conversation and a “great to meet you” attitude.

Palmer’s runs a premium well (Four Roses bourbon, Citadelle French gin) with \$2 off well drinks during the happy times, which translates to about \$8 to \$9 per glass. Wines are around \$8 for a good pour and house cocktails are \$8 to \$9, with select beers at \$6, including Anchor Steam on draught. Small plates of dry BBQ baby back ribs, spicy meatballs and bacon, macaroni and cheese, plus other dishes are \$10. Overall, the leather bar stools are comfy and the atmosphere on a recent late afternoon was more relaxed adults than millennials on the make.

THE PERFECT GIFT: For the lady or gent who has everything: a barrel of Kentucky bourbon. **KYLE NADEAU**, who runs **MAISON CORBEAUX**, the spare but stylish hive of rare liquors, wines, beers in the former London Market at the corner of Sacramento and Divisadero, will fly to Kentucky, choose a barrel of cask-strength Four Roses or some other bourbon, oversee the bottling, put your name on a custom-designed label and deliver 150 to 175 bottles to your front door for \$10,000.

Nadeau, who created the American Whiskey Club at **D & M LIQUORS** on Fillmore a while back, stocks 350 American and world whiskeys in his shop. And that’s just for starters. Under the narrow, high-ceilinged space, lit by six massive crystal chandeliers, is a trove of treasures for any aficionado of the libational arts.

And now there’s a deli. Last month Nadeau leased space in the back to a meat company for a small butchery that also makes sandwiches, pizzas, soups and salads. During the week, he hosts no-cost tastings for customers and drop-bys: wines on Wednesday, beers on Thursday, spirits on Friday.

The Beat goes on. Send newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com or call 415-921-5092.



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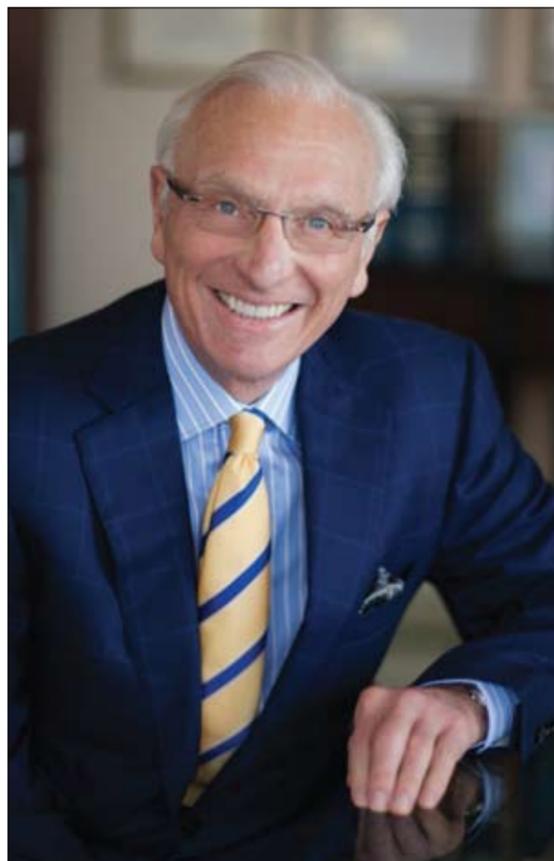


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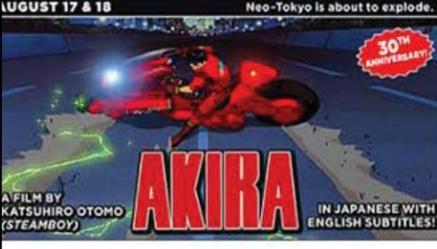
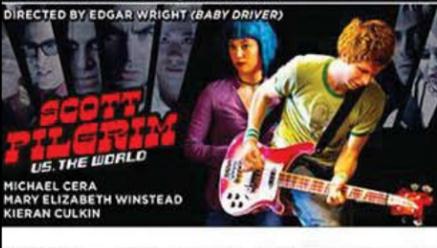


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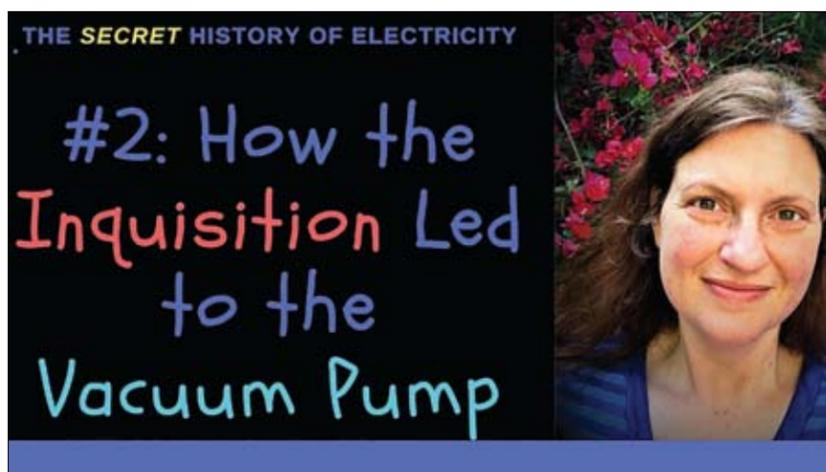
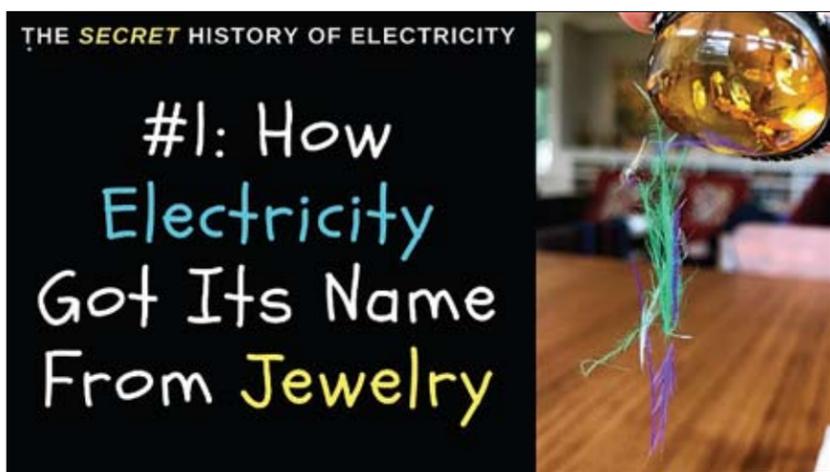
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My Electric Journey

By KATHY JOSEPH BALISTRERI

IT ALL STARTED during lunch at La Mediterranee last year. I had written the rough draft of a novel about the crazy, particular, sometimes heroic and sometimes downright despicable people who discovered electricity, but I was stumped on what to do next. Should I try to get a publisher? Start a blog? Hire an editor?

Luckily, I was having lunch with my friend Kim Nalley. Kim has been the headliner at the Fillmore Jazz Festival almost every year for the last 15 years, so she knows about entertaining. I was lucky enough to meet her through parenting. Our older kids went to the Sherith Israel's preschool on California Street, and now our younger kids go there together.

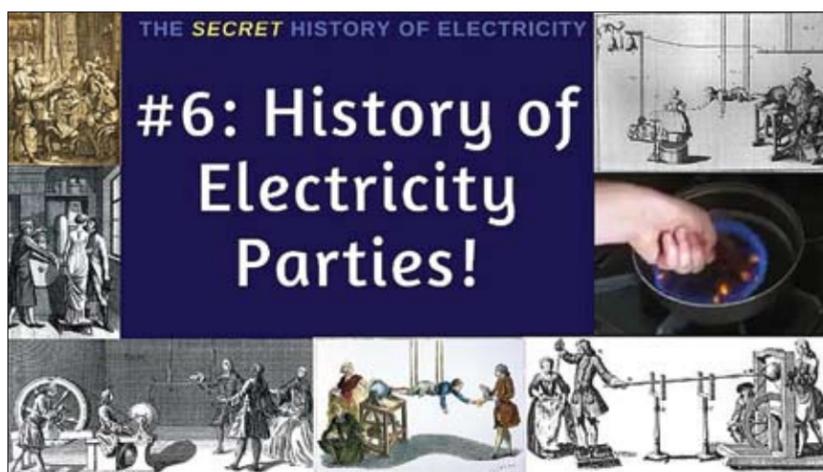
Kim immediately knew what to do: "Kathy, you like to talk. Start a vlog, a video series."

That started a quest to transform my ideas onto the screen, albeit a small one. Luckily, my book is composed of a series of vignettes about one remarkable person or idea, each leading to the next. So I learned how to edit video and started recording in my house on Washington Street. Kim helped me out by recording an original version of "Electricity" from a "Schoolhouse Rock" video for my theme song.

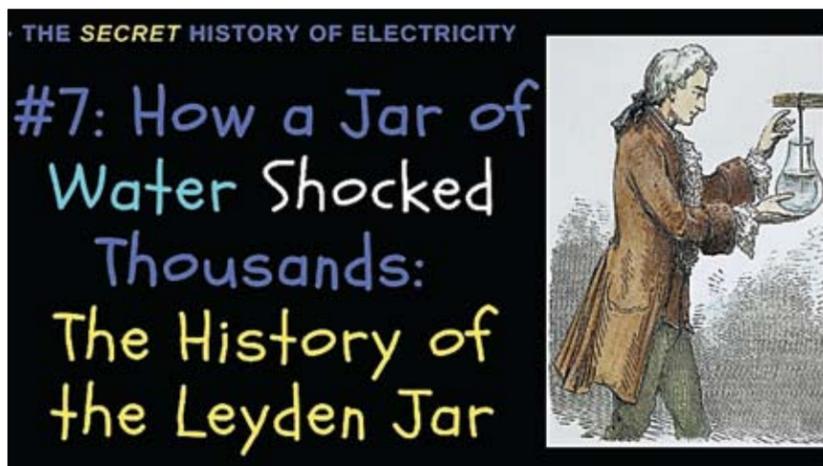
I have now filmed 37 videos of these strange stories and am planning another 40 or so. I often try to include a fun experiment related to the history I'm telling, such as lighting an LED with pennies or using a spark to make a radio beep. The highlight so far was when I mimicked an 18th century wizard's flamboyant demonstration by electrifying myself and then using a spark from my bare hand to set alcohol on fire.

I'm often asked if there is a San Fran-

How a novel about the discovery of electricity came to life in a vlog



Video screen shots show Kathy Joseph Balistreri's lively approach to her topic.



cisco connection, and of course there is. In 1920, when Philo Farnsworth was 14 years old, he was looking at rows of wheat and came up with the idea of creating moving pictures with bright and dark spots in lines on a cathode

ray tube. He invented television. But it took the poor farm boy several more years to convince anyone to back him. One of the backers was from San Francisco, and he convinced a local banker to finance Farnsworth's mad scheme.

Soon Philo, his wife Pem and her brother Cliff Garner moved into a warehouse at 202 Green Street, where everyone taught themselves how to solder wire, blow glass and create chemical films used to cobble together a system. Within two years, they managed to transmit an image across a screen.

By May of the following year, they invited their impatient banker for a demonstration and waited until he issued his common complaint: "When are we going to see some dollars in this thing, Farnsworth?" With a flourish, they turned on the television and projected a clear image of ... a dollar sign. Six more years passed before it began to resemble modern television, and much of Farnsworth's creation was stolen by RCA.

But, for good or ill, television started on September 7, 1927, when Farnsworth sent a telegram that said simply: "The damn thing works!"

A little about me: I moved into the neighborhood when I was 8 years old, then went to Hamlin School and University High School. After moving away for college and other adventures, I am happy to be back near Fillmore raising my kids (Alicia, 5, and Alex, 2) in this exciting and vibrant neighborhood. Even though I've lived here for many years, most people know me because of my husband Mike. Perhaps that is because he is 6-foot-6 and has a tendency to walk down the street while throwing the kids in the air and singing a song. It's hard to compete with that.

If you see me at Peet's Coffee, or walking down Fillmore with Mike conducting stupid human tricks, please ask me about the videos and whatever strange story I am telling then.

Or check out my videos on YouTube by searching for "Kathy Loves Physics."

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A Second Novel Set at Sea, but Born on Fillmore

By ANNE GROSS

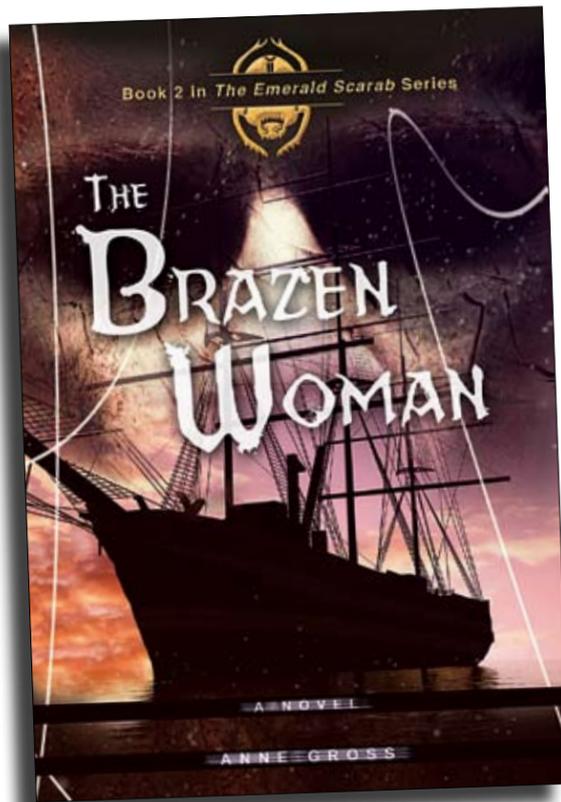
WHEN I graduated from high school, my mother gave me a mermaid pendant on a silver chain, told me I'd always be a fish out of water, and sent me out into the world. I'd never been much of a swimmer, but somehow that made the totem even more apt.

Continuing in that same stream, six years ago my husband and I decided to leave our large home in a remote Colorado mountain town and move into a miniscule apartment in a massive building in the Fillmore neighborhood. The move, although exciting for my husband, who was joining a flood of engineers entering the city, left me gasping for breath. I'd decided to leave my nursing career and start writing, but hadn't anticipated how isolated that choice would leave me in a new city. For months, fear and insecurity circled like sharks, and were my only companions.

The new apartment quickly became oppressive as I pounded on my keyboard, so I took to pounding the sidewalk on and around Fillmore Street. I explored narrow Orben, Perine and Wilmot alleys with plot twists



Anne Gross



and quirky characters whirling in my brain. I became that annoying person in the back pew of St. Dom's who came in from the fog just to eat candy bought at Mollie Stone's. I watched the dogs wrestle in Alta Plaza, tongues lolling happily, while distant sailboats on the bay drifted between the mansions. My hope was to find the best library chair, the perfect cafe, the softest tuft of grass in the park where I could comfortably write. Instead I became Elkin's flaneuse, aimlessly wandering.

The book incubated slowly. In my head, I was in 19th century France, dealing tarot cards for Josephine Bonaparte, I was a witch in a forest glen on the outskirts of London, I was a bartender throwing punches.

But in real life, I was a new resident of San Francisco,

and it all threaded into a wondrous tapestry that turned my reality into magical fiction and my fiction into specific descriptions of the things I experienced. When introduced to people by my very grounded husband, I gave distracted smiles with a faraway gaze. When I wrote, the scents of urine under the Steiner Street bridge over Geary, of pastries wafting from the Fillmore Bakeshop, the magic of the sun breaking through wet fog, the oppression of row homes smashed together, the constant clamor of traffic — it all floated through the developing story.

I'm certainly not unique. A wiki page exists just to list all the writers in alphabetical order who have made this city home. San Francisco is a seven-mile wide distraction for those who set their own schedule, so how is it possible that so many writers have wandered our sidewalks and, at the same time, been so successful?

Recently, I've taken to walking to the top of Lafayette Park to look out over the Spreckels Mansion. Wrapped with an enormous hedge, and tied with a blue ribbon of sky, the mansion houses the most prolific writer of them all — 167 books published, 650 million copies sold, touts Danielle Steel's webpage. I raise my hand in salute to Her Honorable Prodigiousness and whisper: "Someday, I'll be you." They say that giving voice to your desires will help manifest them, and furtive whispers are much easier for me than adopting Steel's discipline.

Remarkably, I ended up living on a thumb of land perilously surrounded by water. Somehow my mother knew, all those years ago in Minnesota, that I'd become a landed mermaid. Six years after moving here, I'm now breathing easily, swimming strong, perfectly comfortable with the rhythm of the city — a city, it turns out, full of other mermaids and mermen. It seems fashionable these days to denigrate San Francisco, but I'm too thankful to join that frog chorus.

My second novel, *The Brazen Woman*, has just been released, and it might come as no surprise that the character I created is the ultimate fish out of water.

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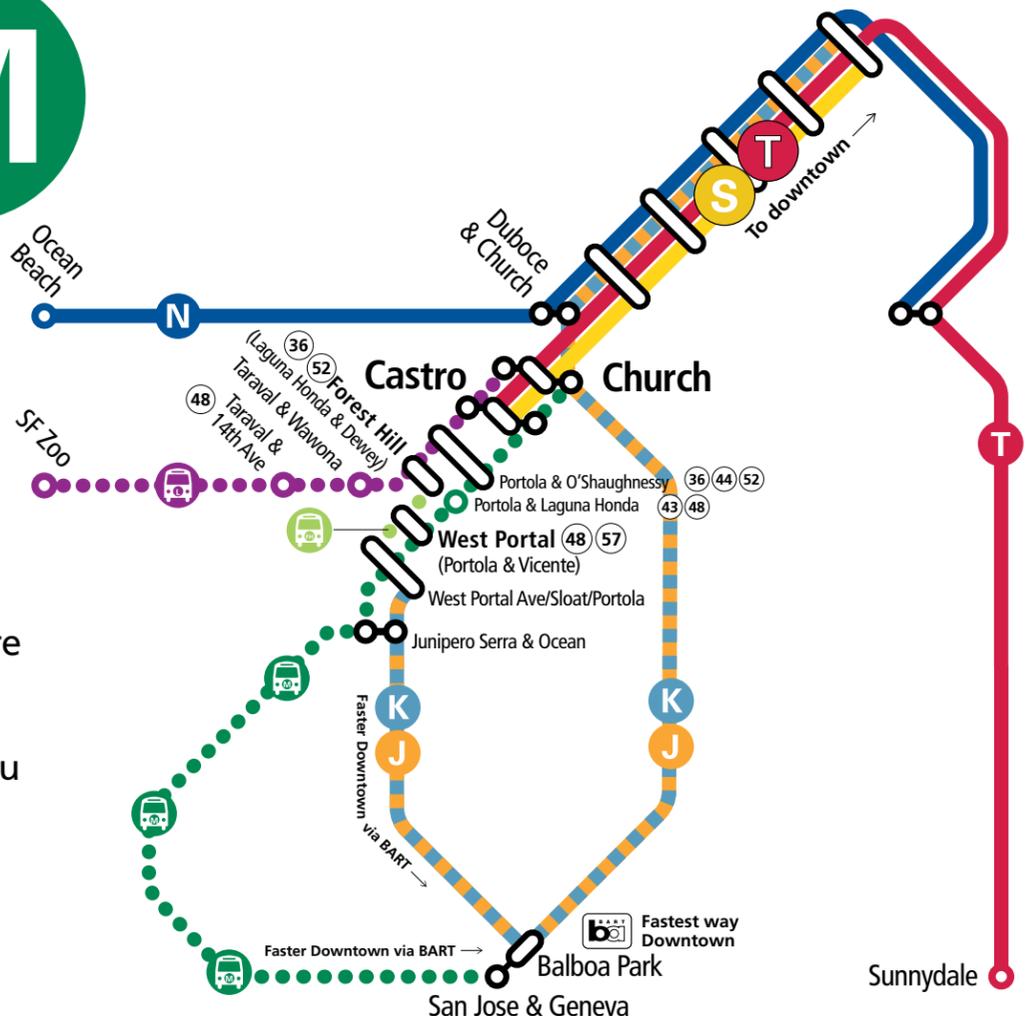


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By FRAN MORELAND JOHNS

“OUR CONGREGATION reflects San Francisco,” says Senior Warden Gordon Park-Li of historic Christ Episcopal Church Sei Ko Kai, which graces the corner of Pierce and Clay Streets across from Alta Plaza Park’s grand staircase.

On any given Sunday, its small, warm sanctuary welcomes Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans and Americans of assorted other heritages. In a neighborhood where houses sell in the multiple millions, the stately Victorian home of Christ Church offers a unique link to the good and the bad of San Francisco’s past, as well as its constantly changing future.

Founded by Nippon Sei Ko Kai in 1895, it was the first Japanese Christian mission of the Anglican Communion in America. Originally located at 421 Powell Street, the mission soon moved to 709 Geary to share a three-story building with Fukuin-Kai, the Japanese Gospel Society, established in 1877. From there, the mission moved to several other locations before settling in at 1732 Buchanan Street from 1920 to 1942. Early on, Sei Ko Kai was recognized as an organized mission of the Episcopal Diocese of California, coming under the sponsorship of Trinity Episcopal and later Grace Cathedral.

After World War II and the internment of much of Japantown, the church moved to its current location in 1952. It shares space in its three-story Victorian with the Integral Counseling Center, which offers low-cost counseling, and with Alta Plaza Preschool. Both are part of the church’s intention to serve the community.

Rev. Debra Low-Skinner became vicar, or priest in charge, in 2016. In researching the building’s history, she found it was originally exactly what it looks like: a private residence. The property was willed to Grace Cathedral in 1935. Low-Skinner also found a copy of a 1950 document certifying the building was insured for \$10,000, which might not cover replacement of the front steps today.



MAUREEN SULLIVAN

Rev. Debra Low-Skinner (above) is vicar of Christ Church Sei Ko Kai. Its Victorian home faces Alta Plaza Park, where the congregation gathered on Easter Sunday (below).

A Test of Faith

Through internment and redevelopment, Sei Ko Kai has pursued its mission



JOSEPH KEI NAGAI

Internment decimated the Japanese American community and forced the church to close in 1942. Most of the congregation was interned at Topaz, Utah; some in other camps. Christ Church’s priest in charge, Rev. Joseph Kenjiro Tsukamoto, carried on the ministry in the camp along with Hisayoshi Terasawa, who later was also ordained.

When the war ended, many church

members moved to other parts of the country. But a group of supporters convinced the Episcopalian bishop to reopen it. “The Rev. Tsukamoto and his wife Jane sought out not only English-speaking prospects, but also new arrivals from Japan and Hawaii, inviting them in, feeding and occasionally housing them in their own little vicarage,” a history of the church notes.

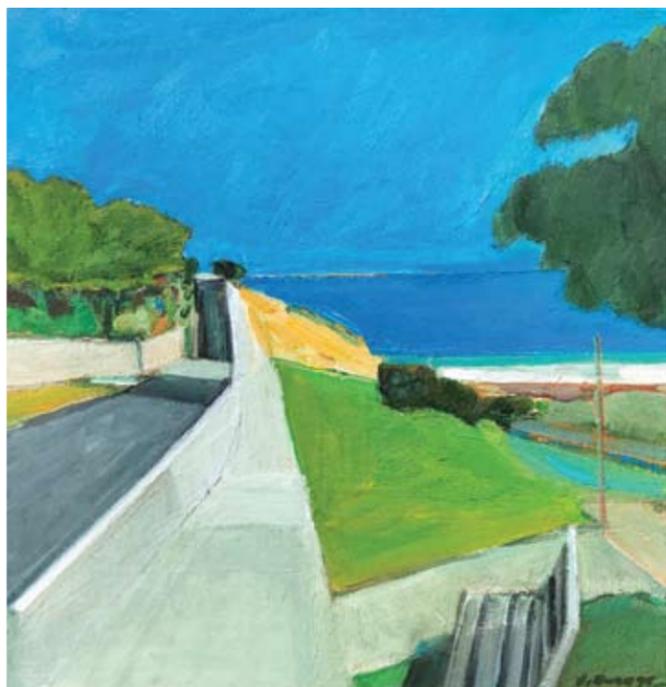
At the time of the internment, the congregation numbered approximately 150. Afterward, through the work of the Tsukamotos and others, it was gradually growing toward that number once again. But the little mission suffered another blow with the massive redevelopment of the Western Addition that uprooted countless Japanese American and African American families. In the years since, members have continued to move away, but a few others have joined. Now on most Sundays there is a group of 15 to 18 worshippers.

The spirit of Christ Church Sei Ko Kai remains undimmed. Its commitment continues as a voice for the Asian community in San Francisco and the Bay Area. Vicar Low-Skinner is president of the Japanese American Religious Federation and is active in organizations such as the San Francisco Interfaith Council and the Asian Commission of the Diocese of California.

“We’ve realized over the years the importance of the social aspect,” Park-Li says. Japanese green tea is offered after services, and special events on Mother’s Day and Easter are popular. Park-Li also has a few secret agents: his 4-year-old granddaughter and grandchildren of several other parishioners, who delight in carrying “the gold plate” for the offering or extinguishing candles at the end of Sunday services. Services today are in English, though one of the readings is always in Japanese.

Reflecting the shifting times, Low-Skinner is Chinese American and grew up in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Her husband, who died of Parkinson’s disease two years ago, was a retired urban planner proud of his Danish heritage. Park-Li, retired chief executive officer of the San Francisco Superior Court, is also of Chinese heritage. He grew up south of Market in San Francisco; his Japanese American wife grew up in Tokyo.

“I don’t know what God has in mind for this church,” Low-Skinner says. “But I know we’ve been here for well over a century, and we’ll continue to serve God and the community as long as we’re here.”



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He Turns Short Stories Into Plays

BY PAMELA FEINSILBER

DRAMA PROFESSOR, theater director and neighborhood resident Joel Mullennix has for two decades been part of the unique San Francisco theater company Word for Word. The actors begin not with a playwright's script, but with a stellar short story — and yes, they convey every single word, through innovative dramatization. Mullennix has directed a number of the company's plays, including stories by Alice Munro, Elizabeth Strout and Lorrie Moore.

From August 8 through September 2, in celebration of the company's 25th season, he's directing Tobias Wolff's *Deep Kiss*, one-half of *Anniversary! Stories by Tobias Wolff and George Saunders*, at Z Space at 450 Florida Street.

How does a person become a director?

I got an MFA in acting from UC Davis, worked for years as an actor in the Bay Area and began teaching — I'm still teaching — at Chabot College. Mostly I teach acting. One day the head of the theater department asked if I would direct a play. I didn't know how to direct, but I gained some experience doing that. I was working with Word for Word a lot as an actor, and



SAM STRINGER

Word for Word's Joel Mullennix finds inspiration while walking his dog in Alta Plaza Park.

in, maybe, 2005 they asked me to co-direct *The Isabel Fish*, by Julie Orringer.

How did that go?

My co-director was Delia MacDougall, who's directing the Saunders story. Her father was ill, and she had to step away, so I ended up directing a lot of that play. Then Word for Word started hiring me to direct. Maybe the first thing I did on my own was for the now-defunct Traveling Jewish Theatre. From that, I started getting directing jobs. I'm still directing plays at the college.

How do you go about creating a script from a short story?

In my early days with Word for Word,

we didn't even have a printed form to work with; we would decide who says what in rehearsal. Since then, with limited rehearsal time, when I come in I've already decided: This line, the mother says; this line, the friend says. I've broken the story into a play form. But as you rehearse, it changes. Maybe somebody comes in with an idea. When we were doing *Bullet in the Brain* for *More Stories by Tobias Wolff*, we spent hours and hours on one paragraph.

What about figuring out how the actors portray objects, like a bus or a car?

A good example is the red Miata in the Wolff story *Down to Bone*. One of the characters buys a sexy red convertible, so we decided to make one of the actors the

car. She wore a low-cut red dress and high heels and pulled him behind her with a scarf in her teeth. I don't think I had that idea starting off, but when we were rehearsing, she had some ideas about it, and the choreographer helped.

Any unique challenges in turning Wolff and Saunders stories into plays?

I think Saunders' *Victory Lap* is a little more out there in terms of the language and thoughts. Some stories are more expressionistic, and sometimes it's easier to express moments of fantasy and wonder. Wolff's work doesn't lend itself to something really clever, since it doesn't have as many big dramatic events — although we're trying to create a moment of rock climbing. That'll be fun to figure out.

How are you approaching *Deep Kiss*?

Tomorrow we move into the theater, and a lot of that discovery will be made.

Do you draw inspiration from the neighborhood?

I spend a lot of time walking around the neighborhood with my dog, going to Alta Plaza Park and then getting coffee, and I'm often thinking while I'm doing that. A lot of work goes into creating the movement. I'll go up to Peet's or Jane or Blue Bottle Coffee and sit and work there. I'm sure I did some reading of this story and breaking it into a script in some of those places.

I love eating at SPQR, Florio, Delfina — I go there so often, many of the people know me. I went into Browser Books a lot with my son when he was a little boy. The people there are always interested in what I'm doing and often come to the shows.

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Once Upon a Time in the Fillmore

The rents were cheap in the 1970s, which drew a tribe of painters, novelists, poets and dancers

BY PETER VINCENT

IT WAS 1973. The Haight-Ashbury was boarded up. The war was virtually over. The things that had spawned radical communities were dissipating. I had exhausted my back-to-nature fantasy by spending some time in Mendocino with a friend who had rented a house deep in the woods. Terry was a painter. I was finishing my second novel. I was also clearing my head after ending the worst relationship of my life.

Then it started raining — incessantly.

I came back to my place on Masonic Street and Terry ended up near Fillmore and California. There was really no reason to come here in those days. But that's what gave it its charm.

It wasn't the New Fillmore then. It definitely wasn't Lower Pacific Heights. It was an unknown corner of the Fillmore — just some rundown Victorian apartments and a quiet shopping street with a few antique shops and vintage clothing stores that attracted people from Pacific Heights during the day. The neighborhood was mostly black. The rents were cheap. That's what drew a new tribe of students, painters, novelists, poets, actors and dancers.

The community center was the Donut Hole, now Tacobar, on the corner of Fillmore and California. There were coffee shops in the city then, and a couple of cafes in North Beach. That's where you got something exotic like a cappuccino. Otherwise it was coffee, donuts and sandwiches. Coffee at the Donut Hole cost 21 cents.

The Donut Hole had an orange and white interior with glaring overhead lights and a checkerboard floor in black and white. It had Formica tables and padded chairs. For all its simplicity, it was a beehive of interesting conversations with all sorts of people. We'd show up in the morning and talk for a couple of hours before heading off to our private pursuits, then show up again in the afternoon.

HARDLY ANYONE seemed to be working. There was a recession underway. I was teaching a fiction writing class one night a week at San Francisco State. Terry collected disability because he had broken his back in the Navy when his truck went over a cliff. He had a painting studio at Fillmore and Sacramento, above what is now Peet's Coffee. The tall glass windows still reveal what a great setting it was.

There was also a heavysset guy named Jim who had stashed some money away and then quit his job to work on his detective novel. There was a psychiatrist named Al, with a practice on California Street, who would schedule an hour for the Donut Hole just to join us. There was Ron the poet, who would eventually open a bird shop on Fillmore. And Henry, a pale, thin man who always dressed like an undertaker in all black, with dyed black hair pulled back in a ponytail. Henry was in his early 40s, a gay man whose father, a colonel in the Army, sent him a monthly allowance to keep him away from home base. Henry specialized in paintings that

imitated Russian Orthodox art, a tribute to his Russian grandmother.

There was also a young hippie couple who reopened the Clay Theatre as a second-run art house, featuring double bills of Fellini films or a weeklong Charlie Chaplin festival. They did everything themselves, from sweeping the place to working the ticket window. It was a cold and rainy winter, as winters usually were then. I loved to sink into a long afternoon at a cheap matinee for a cozy escape, my legs hooked over the seat in front of me, because there were so few people in the theater.

And of course there was Jack, a perpetually out-of-work actor, who had an old fire truck he liked to drive around the neighborhood with a few of us crammed into the front seat. Otherwise it was used for dates and could usually be seen pulled up on the sidewalk near Jack's flat on Wilmot Street.

IF THE MORNING table was mostly male, lots of interesting women would show up in the afternoon.

There was a modern dance studio up the street, above where Athleta is located now, and the girls would stop by after class. Elin was a young sculptress who lived at the Hard Times Hotel on Steiner Street, a faded blue building with cheap apartments. She created genderless corpses wrapped in gauze that dangled from her ceiling by a hangman's noose, with tilted heads and subtle smiles. There was a lush sensuality in her morbidity, suggesting something better might lie ahead.

The only celebrity to appear at the Donut Hole was the film star Divine, who showed up for a few days, sat alone by a window with coffee, then disappeared.

Women with kids in school would congregate at a table by the window on the California Street side. Linda had five children, but when they all were in school she was free to find an identity outside of her husband and household. She was taking drawing classes and would sit there sketching the Donut Hole crowd. One day I caught her drawing me and waited until she was finished before I went over to introduce myself. I discovered she was well read and we became fast friends. After awhile, I started going to drawing classes with her.

Alice was a large, generous, outgoing woman, who usually wore a long denim skirt, a blue work shirt and a cowboy hat. She had a vintage furniture shop on the corner of Fillmore and Pine, now with papered windows but soon to become a new restaurant. Alice was always open for a glass of wine in her flat above the shop after work.

Bob and Darlene were living together on California Street, across the street from the Grand Central Market. Darlene was helping raise Bob's 7-year-old daughter Anya, as well as her own young daughter. When Alice showed up, she and Darlene would inevitably discuss what they were going to make for dinner. Bob seemed bored and read his paper. Before long, he left the table. I'd soon learn that they were on the verge of breaking up.

I finally met Bob when he joined Linda and me one day, and soon began to realize the quiet and self-effacing Robert Gonzalez was the most interesting of the lot. He had grown up in Latino neighborhoods in Los Angeles and began winning awards for his painting in high school. He went to art school and then married and had two kids. He made a living creating window displays in department stores in L.A. while he continued to paint, but could find no interest in his work. He had one foot in the conventional world and another in living life as a dedicated artist. When he moved to San Francisco, the artist took over.

AS ONE OF the original founders of Galeria de la Raza, Bob was fully identified with the Latino art movement. His swarthy darkness was made muscular by his days as a star athlete. He had a deep gravelly voice, clouded by too much drink and smoke. He was usually dressed in a straw hat, paint-smearing overalls and sandals, with a red bandana around his neck. On cold days he wore a poncho.

When he and Darlene broke up, he took a flat above an empty storefront — now the restaurant Octavia — at Bush and Octavia Streets. He used the storefront as a painting studio. Sometimes he didn't have the money for canvas, so he painted on paper and cardboard. He was an abstract painter who liked to work in acrylic, watercolor and pencil.

He had already had his first one-person show at the Malvina Miller Gallery out on Sacramento Street and a second show was planned. We went to the opening together and I was surprised to learn what a rising star he was and to see all the adulation he received at a small party afterwards. His mention that he wanted to begin adding figurative elements to his painting caused quite a stir.

I'd often stop by his studio when my own work was finished and we'd sit and talk for hours. I was devoted to art history, in which he was thoroughly educated. He loved poetry and I was still writing poetry then.

On Christmas Eve, I found him in the studio doing a drawing in pencil and acrylic.

"Sit down," he said when I came in. "I'm just finishing up your Christmas present."

He'd sold some paintings after his show and the place was stocked with lumber and newly built frames, along with several rolls of canvas. He'd built a couple of solid work tables, scattered with tools, color tubes and brushes. Several paintings in progress stood against a wall and another one sat on an easel. He often worked on several paintings at a time, moving from one to the other, and then back and forth again, for however many days it took to finish each painting.

I sat down on an overturned tub and filled a dirty glass from a cheap jug of wine. He was making me a drawing on stiff fiberglass paper, on which several shades of blue and purple were washed over by carmine red. He added a dark stick figure on the right, which might have



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A great day on Fillmore

"One day in 1977 the word went out," remembers longtime Fillmore resident Dan Max. "Show up on the corner of Fillmore and California on Sunday morning. It was Al Tolkoff's idea. Al had bought a Hasselblad, and he was gonna take this picture of

the locals. He was a psychiatrist, but he was always talking about photography. When Sunday came, a lot of people showed up early. The Donut Hole was the neighborhood hangout. It was rich in the culture of San Francisco at that time — counterculturalists of varying persuasions. By the 1980s, most of these people had dispersed. When they opened Fillamento and the Elite Cafe in 1981, things began to change."

been a long-necked bird. It also might have been the first time he added anything figurative to a work.

"Here," he said when he finished. "Here's your Christmas present."

I admired the piece, still moist from the paint, and then set it aside. I had already given him a signed copy of my first novel.

"I'll pick it up tomorrow," I said. "Let's go celebrate at Minnie's."

MINNIE'S CAN-DO CLUB was located where Florio is now. Connie's Soul Food was a few doors down. There was a Goodwill across the street, as well as the New Zion Baptist Church.

The long bar in the Can-Do's front room opened into a back room, where a ping pong table was set up until it was time for the music and dancing to begin. There was a piano in the back room and a jukebox in the front room against the wall. The front room had local paintings along the wall and behind the bar, the most distinct being a portrait of Minnie herself.

Minnie was an attractive woman, about 40, who spent most of the night on the end stool near the door while her son and some others tended bar. I'd often pull up on the stool beside her and we'd have a good conversation.

When Dave Alexander showed up, the ping pong

table was cleared and he'd sit down at the piano to launch his first set of the night. He was a great piano player, backed by a standup bass and a drummer. He played honky-tonk, blues and jazz.

On a good night, the bar was packed and the dance floor was full. It was a mix of everybody: gays, straights, mixed couples, blacks, whites and people of many shades. Even Richard Hongisto, the sheriff at the time, was known to stop by. Everybody was loose and friendly and most likely drunk. Everyone was still enjoying that civil rights glow that suggested racism had vanished in the dust of new thinking.

After midnight, musicians from all over the city would show up when they finished their gigs and start jamming with Dave. One night Elvin Bishop, who played with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, showed up and blew the lid off the place. When things got really hot, Minnie was prone to forget about closing time.

IT WAS AT Minnie's that I slowly began to pull away from this sweet little scene, after meeting a woman from Palm Springs who was visiting a mutual friend. It was one of the best relationships of my life, but it never would have begun if it weren't for that first date at Minnie's Can-Do Club, when I leaned off my stool in the middle of a sentence and surprised her with a kiss.

Poem for Robert Gonzalez

Sometimes there is rock crystal,
at other times the light's foliage.
But who understands drunken nights
better than the children of art?

This morning I am sad
because the sun is not a ferocious star,
because all of mankind is victim
and prisoner of words that flower to nothing.

This morning I think this boy of mine
does not want any more poems.

But the street rises, it insists!
Do not forget the voices of your friends,
remember the cup in the eye, the fountains,
the flowers, the little hills,
the bird opening his wings!

— RONALD HOBBS

[This poem was written in drunkard's Spanish at Casa Sanchez on Fillmore Street while Bob and I were getting righteously hammered one night.]

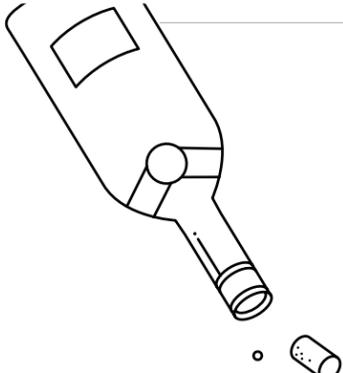


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Making It Modern

Joseph Esherick designed important homes in Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights

By BRIDGET MALEY

THOSE WHO attended the 1960 American Institute of Architects convention in San Francisco were offered, for \$1.95, a small but incredibly informative guidebook to the area's best buildings. Titled *Buildings of the Bay Area: A Guide to the Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region*, and written by then husband and wife John and Sally Woodbridge, this little gem led conventiongoers to all corners of the area. The book included commentary on key historic landmarks. But more important for an audience of architects, it pointed to recently constructed buildings that embodied a developing regional modernism.

The Woodbridges' guidebook — a must-have for architectural aficionados — featured a number of architect Joseph Esherick's houses in Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights.

Esherick, often grouped with other architects of the Second Bay Tradition, was a native Philadelphian whose father was an electrical engineer. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in 1937, Esherick relocated to San Francisco.

He worked briefly for structural engineer Walter Steilberg before joining the office of architect Gardner Dailey. He started his own practice in 1946, after serving in World War II. Esherick taught at UC Berkeley from 1952 to 1985, and later formed a practice with George Homsey, Peter Dodge and Charles Davis.

With these partners, Esherick collaborated on numerous houses at Sea Ranch, repurposed the Cannery at Fisherman's Wharf, designed Stevenson College at UC Santa Cruz and completed the award-winning Monterey Bay Aquarium. Esherick was awarded the AIA Gold Medal in 1989 for his exceptional contribution to architecture.

During his tenure in Dailey's office, Esherick absorbed a great deal and became a key contributor to several of Dailey's important pre-war houses. The experience influenced Esherick's work when he struck out on his own. In 1940 Esherick designed a home in Marin County for his own family, which became a defining project in his early career.

In 1950, attorney Arthur Cohen hired Esherick to design a house for



MORLEY BAER

Esherick's Richard and Rhoda Goldman House at 3700 Washington Street in Presidio Heights.



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At left, Esherick's 2610 Scott. At right, his deceptively simple facade at 2960 Vallejo.

a spectacular but complicated hillside lot on the north side of Vallejo Street near the Lyon Street steps. The structure at 2960 Vallejo Street has oversized vertical shingles and a side courtyard that steps down to the entry. The woodframe house sits on a hefty concrete slab with thick column supports and meanders down the hill toward its Green Street neighbor. The two-story, simple Vallejo Street facade hides a much larger and more intricate home. The house is a strong contrast to the older staid brick home on the east.

Pacific Height's Raycliff Terrace was developed over a 10-year period, with several master architects designing homes for important clients. Situated on previously undeveloped lots off Pacific Avenue between Divisadero and Broderick, John and Sally Woodbridge observed of Raycliff Terrace that it was an "opportunity to compare recent works of several architects close at hand." Esherick's contribution at 75

Raycliff Terrace was built in 1951: a wood-frame, two-story-over-garage dwelling with vertical redwood tongue and groove siding and large expanses of windows, including a ribbon of transom windows at the south facade and a courtyard created by a front setback designed for well-known Bay Area contractor Robert Cahill and his wife Vivian. The Cahills returned to Esherick in the early 1970s to design their elaborate Woodside estate.

Also completed in 1951 was 3700 Washington Street, at Spruce, in Presidio Heights. Of Esherick's design, John and Sally Woodbridge noted: "The Bay Region blending of informality and elegance is shown here in the unexpected but successful combination of barn siding and double hung windows with delicate iron work and a formal entry." Esherick's clients for this house were Richard and Rhoda Goldman, whose philanthropic generosity is reflected

across the city and in the annual Goldman Environmental Prize.

The Goldman House, which wraps around a garden court along Spruce Street, is set back from Washington Street with the garage on the west side. The entry court, with its simple concrete pillars, terminates in the glazed window wall of the living room's south face. Author Marc Treib noted that "although realized early in his career, the Goldman House stands as one of Esherick's great works, and it demonstrates the sophistication already achieved in his conceptualization and realization of buildings." Today, mature landscaping provides only a glimpse of the house from the corner, but from Washington Street, you get a peek into the notable entry court.

Another of Esherick's important houses is 2610 Scott Street. This 1962 home built for Niels Larsen, a contractor, is the epitome of Esherick's hillside boxes. Its overhanging, projecting, glazed bay makes

a strong statement at the front facade. The house features a stunning interior spiral staircase that shows Esherick's attention to detail and the exceptional workmanship often found in his interiors.

Joe Esherick's houses in Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights provide a view into the design aesthetic of post-war San Francisco. His work is often said to bridge the earlier work of the First Bay Tradition with that of the later third generation of architects, many of whom he collaborated with at Sea Ranch. Esherick's ability to work on difficult, previously undeveloped sites and provide engaging modern facades that fit within the context of earlier architectural styles made him a much sought after architect.

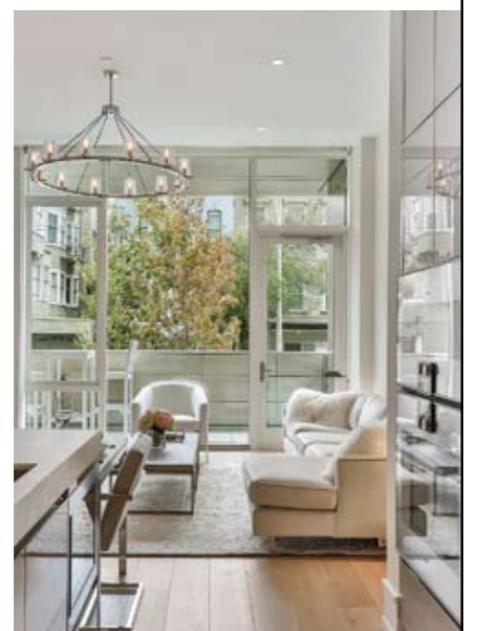
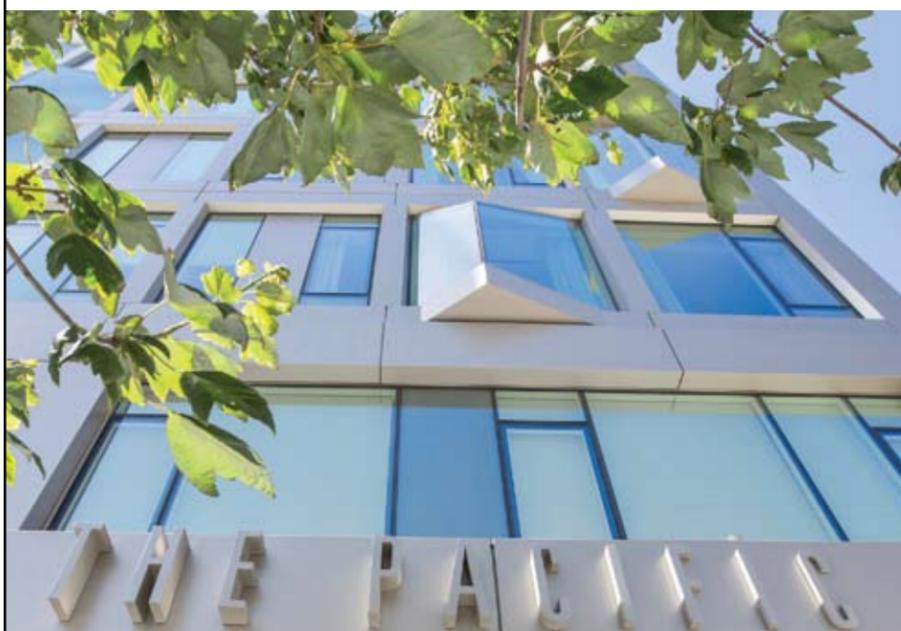
Treib's aptly titled study, *Appropriate: The Houses of Joseph Esherick*, is a good read, providing both a contextual and detailed history of Esherick's modern dwellings.

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	JOUR 19: Contemporary News Media			
76160	M W F	9:10 – 10:00 a.m.	MUB 170	Gonzales
	JOUR 21: News Reporting and Writing			
76162	M W F	10:10 – 11:00 a.m.	MUB 170	Gonzales
78101	M	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 475	Gonzales
	JOUR 22: Feature Writing			
77048	R	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 217	Rochmis
	JOUR 23: Electronic Copy Editing			
77048	R	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 218	Rochmis
	JOUR 24: Newspaper Laboratory			
76882	M W F	12:10 – 1:00 p.m.	BNGL 615	Gonzales
	JOUR 26: Fundamental of Public Relations			
74606	R	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 217	Gonzales
	JOUR 29A: Magazine Editing & Production			
78546	M	6:30 – 8:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 217	Lifland
	T	Hours Arranged	Mission Rm 218	Lifland
	JOUR 31: Internship Experience			
72312		Hours Arranged	BNGL 615	Gonzales
	JOUR 35: Internet Journalism			
78102	M	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 271	Gonzales
	JOUR 37: Intro to Photojournalism			
76939	W	6:30 – 9:20 p.m.	Mission Rm 217	Lifland

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NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
10 Imperial Ave	3	1	0	1,612	13	6/28/2018	1,895,000	2,000,000
1834 Gough St	3	3	1	1,910	67	7/10/2018	3,195,000	2,912,500
1868 Greenwich St	2	1	1	1,636	63	6/24/2018	3,000,000	3,000,000
2760 Lyon St	4	3	2	2,940	44	7/11/2018	4,995,000	4,995,000
2619 Baker St	4	3	1	n/a	11	6/28/2018	4,795,000	5,600,000
3358 Washington St	3	4	2	3,726	12	6/27/2018	6,350,000	6,500,000
2811 Vallejo St	3	3	2	3,526	16	6/26/2018	8,350,000	8,000,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts

1450 Post St #1202	1	1	1	540	84	6/22/2018	250,000	245,000
1817 California St #106	1	1	1	542	42	7/6/2018	700,000	680,000
2761 Greenwich St	1	1	0	934	21	6/26/2018	890,000	1,001,000
2801 Jackson St #301	1	1	1	n/a	11	7/10/2018	1,295,000	1,325,000
1747 Sutter St	3	1	1	1,475	13	7/12/2018	1,198,000	1,400,000
2200 Sacramento St #108	2	2	1	n/a	1	7/10/2018	1,500,000	1,550,000
1740 Franklin St #6	3	1	1	1,688	13	7/13/2018	1,395,000	1,610,000
1631 Pierce St	3	2	1	1,397	468	6/20/2018	1,495,000	1,700,000
1865 Clay St #5	3	2	1	1,670	31	6/26/2018	1,795,000	1,850,000
2830 Pierce St	3	2	1	n/a	7	6/20/2018	1,895,000	2,100,000
3701 Clay St #3	3	2	1	2,270	14	7/9/2018	2,195,000	2,170,000
2531 Gough St	3	2	2	n/a	8	6/22/2018	1,895,000	2,450,000
1849 Lyon St	3	3	2	1,973	22	7/5/2018	2,595,000	2,575,000
2111 Franklin St #PH	2	2	1	2,300	14	6/25/2018	2,995,000	3,100,000
2876 Washington St	3	3	2	n/a	61	7/6/2018	3,475,000	3,300,000



It took more than a year, but the flat at 1631 Pierce (center) sold for a considerable premium.

Biggest sales slowdown in years

Home sales typically follow seasonal patterns and slow in the summer once schools go on hiatus and families take vacations. But this year, there was a particularly pronounced lull, and several factors other than summer vacations may have contributed.

From mid-June to mid-July, there were 22 single-family home and condominium sales in Lower Pacific Heights, Pacific Heights, Cow Hollow and Presidio Heights. That's nearly a 40 percent drop from the past couple of years: 37 sales in 2017 and 35 in 2016 during the same period.

The slowdown can be partially attributed to the calendar, with the Fourth of July falling on a Wednesday, likely causing some home shoppers to take a weeklong vacation, rather than attend open houses.

But rising mortgage rates, hovering around 4.5 percent at the beginning of July, are reducing affordability and squeezing some buyers out of the market. It's also likely that buyer fatigue may be setting in because of bidding wars, while some shoppers may have the jitters due to unsettled equities markets.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.

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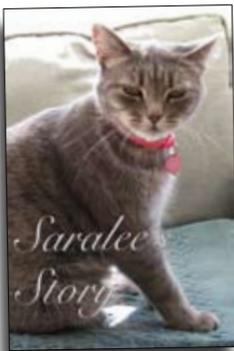
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The cat who could write

After our friend William died, we helped empty out his house on Buchanan Street and put it on the market. His downstairs tenant was moving, and the pregnant cat that lived mostly under the house and on the street was left without a home.

It turned out no one wanted a pregnant cat — not the nearby Pets Unlimited, nor the SPCA, nor anybody else. So we took her home. Then she had 11 kittens — on 7/11, no less. This did not seem lucky, at least not for us, now with a dozen cats.

Although she was busy enough already, eating and nursing and



grooming, again and again and again, we put her to work writing for the neighborhood newspaper. Her nametag — and byline — said Saralee. It turned out she was a

talented writer with a gift for delicate phrasing and noting the wry detail.

"I've called this beautiful neighborhood home my entire life — more than two years now, although a proper lady never tells her age," she began her first story.

These were not her first kittens. "A moment of ardor with an attentive tabby left me with eight kittens to tend — and me just a kitten myself," she wrote. "No sooner had the kids left the nest than I was out the window again. A small party with a cool gray long-haired tomcat and I soon found myself with nine little ones this time."

A visit to the vet capped her prolific output at 28 kitties. Her stories in the *New Fillmore* made motherhood sound like a joy. "I have to say, this might be my most beautiful brood yet," she wrote.

She told her story so well that all of her kittens found new homes — and, in the process, we became related by cat to many of our neighbors. Her kids would write on Mother's Day and on their birthdays. Nearly everywhere we went — to a local restaurant, store, church or coffee shop — we'd get an update on Saralee's kids.

She turned her stories into a book, available on Amazon. And she blossomed into a beautiful and classy Miss Lady, with a lipstick pink collar and heart-shaped nametag.

Saralee died on July 28 after a short illness. She will be missed by many in the neighborhood — and in the literary world.

— THOMAS REYNOLDS

How a Coffee Shop Saved My Life

By JAMES DEKOVEN

ON FEBRUARY 4, 2000, I arrived in the neighborhood under dire circumstances. Six months earlier, my fiancée had given the ring back — a devastating blow that occurred weeks after I gave up a well-paying job to write full-time. Broken-hearted, half-mad and facing an uncertain financial picture, I fled from Santa Barbara to San Francisco.

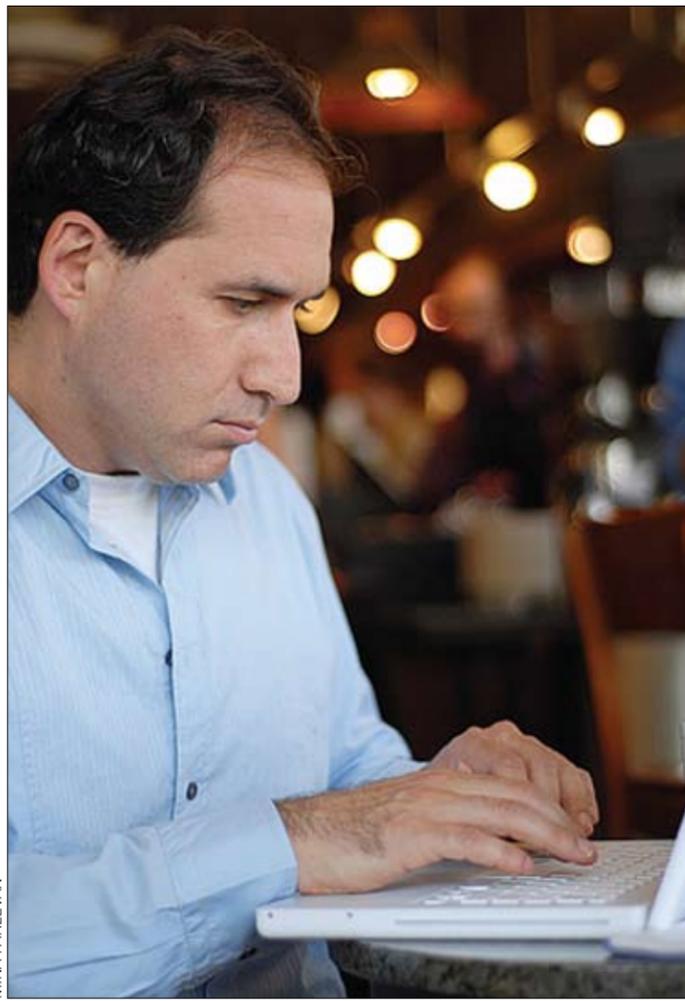
At the time, it was more of an escape than any sort of plan for the future. For better or worse, I've never had many long-term goals. I just needed to get my head together. Once healthy, I could have clarity about the next step. But as I found out, sometimes destiny provides the relief. Who needs a personal coach, Jungian therapy, psychedelic journey, or self-help book when there's Peet's Coffee at Sacramento and Fillmore?

I'd go there to write, and I noticed the same gathering of grizzled philosophers holding court each morning. Anything seemed to be open for analysis: politics, books, film, music, travel, capitalism, science, history, religion, relationships, neighborhood gossip. Fierce debate was peppered with lighthearted personal jabs, a little yelling, and a lot of laughter. It was better than mere discussion — it was bullshitting of the highest order.

One by one I met Fred, Guy, Pete, Kameron, Hilly, Richard, Mal, Tunde, Duane and Denny. They were intelligent and opinionated, and like all deep thinkers, had the ideal skepticism-optimism ratio. More importantly, they were friendly and welcoming. Once they realized I had something to say — albeit often bizarre — I became part of the club and, by extension, part of the community. Those characters helped me climb out of the wreckage of the past and build a new life.

But I have more than the crew at Peet's to thank. My gratitude extends to the entire neighborhood. Almost every day for 16 years, I sat on the bench outside Peet's. I spent thousands of hours there talking with friends, waving to familiar faces as they walked by, greeting the parade of dogs and pretending to work.

It was tough to get much done when, every five minutes, I was interrupted by neighbor after neighbor for a chat: with Joseph to debate the lack of fundamentals in pro basketball; with Jesse to rap about 1960s and 1970s soul music; with Ken to analyze an avant-garde jazz record; with Cathleen, Erin or Caryn to plan our



MINA PAHLEVAN

"Those characters helped me climb out of the wreckage of the past and build a new life."

— JAMES DEKOVEN, at Peet's in 2007

next excursion to the Mission for a burrito.

The truth is that whenever I walked the two blocks from my apartment to Fillmore Street, I actually *wanted* to be interrupted. Being part of this community means constantly running into someone you know. Someone who shares an inside joke, or stops to ask how your mother is feeling. And in a society that's increasingly connected by devices but less by the soul, this is a quality about the neighborhood I'll forever cherish.

In April 2016, I moved to Ocean Beach. On the surface I was breaking up with the old neighborhood, but I was really following a dream — an actual long-term plan of sorts. For years I would spend a few days a week there, going to the beach and working at my satellite office at Java Beach Cafe. I grew up on the coast and have always been more comfortable in a slow-paced beach culture.

Destiny had intervened again. By dumb luck, I had come across a once-in-a-lifetime apartment for rent: on top of a hill, a block from the sea, around the corner from Land's End, with sweeping views of the

Pacific and large sliding glass doors that open onto a wood deck. I could go to sleep to the sound of crashing waves and wake up to the smell of ocean air.

Fillmore Street was hard to give up. It's the perfect neighborhood. Within minutes on foot, I could catch a French film at the Clay, see a funk show at the Boom Boom Room, eat lunch on a sunny day at the top of Alta Plaza Park and get a little exercise on the Lyon Street steps. I miss my regular visits to La Med and Dino's. I miss my pals at Browser Books, the guys at Jet Mail, the gang at La Boulange. Everything I needed was right there.

As it goes with many love stories, hindsight separates fact from fiction. My fiancée and I weren't right for each other — not even close. Tearing my heart out turned out to be the best thing she could've done for me. I was free to write a fresh chapter of my life — one that brought me dozens of friends and countless good memories.

It's strange to think I'm now about as old as those philosophers were two decades ago. To them and to the neighborhood, I raise a glass, toes in the sand.

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