THE NEW FILLMORE

NEW LIFE
FOR AN OLD LIBRARY
HISTORIC MEDICAL LIBRARY BECOMES A "MISSION DRIVEN" EVENT SPACE

SAN FRANCISCO • NOVEMBER 2019

Crime Watch 4
Fillmore Beat 5
New Neighbors 6
Film 10
Architecture 12
Home Sales 14

FOOD & DRINK
Market Loses a Pioneer
Terry Farms was here from the beginning
PAGE 8

LOCALS
A Force for Good
Rita Semel has no time for retirement
PAGE 9
Thanks.

A woman walked up to me in the Financial District and said: “You don’t need cash, I needed cash, and you cashed the Wells Fargo, a woman walked up to me in 7 a.m. I left my house on Lake Street and walked to California Street to take the bus to the bank. But no buses were running. Tiger Wong, grandson of one of the founders of Chinatown, was driving down California Street and gave me a ride.

I opened the bank at 9 with no lights, computers or alarm. I put a sign in the window: “Will cash any bank’s checks for computers or alarm. I put a sign in the window: “Will cash any bank’s checks for computers or alarm.”

The next day at 7 a.m. I opened my shop. Departures from the Past, was next door to Harry’s Bar. I had just moved in the year of the earthquake. When it hit, and the electricity went off, the guys from the kitchen at Harry’s went outside to their car parked in front of smoke. He said the bar was closed, but let us in.

And through the beer and smoke, who was there? Gov. Jerry Brown. He was staying in the neighborhood sometimes.

I secured everything at the bank. We stayed open until 6 with no lights, alarm or computers. The next day at 7 a.m. I left my house on Lake Street and walked to California Street to take the bus to the bank. But no buses were running.

I was thrillled. Normalcy didn't last long. At 5:04 all havoc broke loose. I thought the gas lines had exploded again. They hadn't; it was an earthquake. I was picking customers up from the floor.

I secured everything at the bank. We stayed open until 6 with no lights, alarm or computers. The next day at 7 a.m. I left my house on Lake Street and walked to California Street to take the bus to the bank. But no buses were running. Tiger Wong, grandson of one of the founders of Chinatown, was driving down California Street and gave me a ride.

I opened the bank at 9 with no lights, computers or alarm. I put a sign in the window: “Will cash any bank’s checks for computers or alarm.”

The next day at 7 a.m. I opened my shop. Departures from the Past, was next door to Harry’s Bar. I had just moved in the year of the earthquake. When it hit, and the electricity went off, the guys from the kitchen at Harry’s went outside to their car parked in front of smoke. He said the bar was closed, but let us in.

And through the beer and smoke, who was there? Gov. Jerry Brown. He was staying in the neighborhood sometimes.

I secured everything at the bank. We stayed open until 6 with no lights, alarm or computers. The next day at 7 a.m. I left my house on Lake Street and walked to California Street to take the bus to the bank. But no buses were running. Tiger Wong, grandson of one of the founders of Chinatown, was driving down California Street and gave me a ride.

I opened the bank at 9 with no lights, computers or alarm. I put a sign in the window: “Will cash any bank’s checks for computers or alarm.”

The next day at 7 a.m. I opened my shop. Departures from the Past, was next door to Harry’s Bar. I had just moved in the year of the earthquake. When it hit, and the electricity went off, the guys from the kitchen at Harry’s went outside to their car parked in front of smoke. He said the bar was closed, but let us in.

And through the beer and smoke, who was there? Gov. Jerry Brown. He was staying in the neighborhood sometimes.
A Jewel of a Club Is Closing

Pacific Heights Health Club, once for men only, ends its 35 year run

By Barbara Kate Repa

Pacific Heights Health Club, with its lofty-sounding name and low-key vibe — where designer workout garb was not required — will close its doors for the last time on November 27, the day before Thanksgiving, at precisely 3 p.m.

Amy Lang, who took ownership of the club 15 years ago and appointed herself chief motivating officer, announced the move in a letter to members on November 1.

“San Francisco has changed. Retail has changed. The fitness industry has changed,” Lang said in an interview.

A longtime neighborhood institution, the urban gym at 2356 Pine, just west of Fillmore, has gone through a number of incarnations. It opened in 1984 — when the city had only six health clubs — as a men-only club that offered massages, a hot tub, and was staffed with locker room attendants. It was frequented by a number of celebrity clients, including, for a time, John F. Kennedy Jr.

David Kirk opened the front part of the club to women when he took ownership in 1990. A dozen years later he opened the entire club to all.

Fleeing a worklife in finance and tech, Amy Lang took over as owner in 2004, adding a cheeky sense of marketing along with yoga, Zumba and Pilates classes. Later she discontinued the classes and focused on small group training for older people, a change that didn’t sit well with some of the regulars.

“It created a bit of a kerfuffle,” Lang acknowledges, but also revealed a deeper truth. “It was then that I realized the club is a better place for a person who is a do-it-yourself type of exerciser,” Lang says. “I didn’t know you don’t morph a health club into what you want it to be. But what I’ve learned now allows me to do what I’ve always wanted to do.”

Lang also admits it’s freeing to be untethered from the responsibility of owning and maintaining the 7,221-square-foot club and its various equipment.

CABLE CAR CAROLING

Answering the CALL for FRIENDSHIP LINE

Saturday, December 7th, 2019

A joyous occasion filled with fun caroling to spread the holiday spirit to older adults and adults living with disabilities.

(All donations are tax-deductible - TaxID #94-2978977)

Visit give.ioaging.org/ccc19 to reserve your tickets (space is limited) or call 415.379.3256.
Possession of Firearm, Methamphetamine
Bush and Larkin
September 6, 11:3 a.m.
Officers saw a gold Lexus sweeping across two lanes of traffic in front of them without signaling. The officer who was driving had to apply the brakes to avoid a collision. They noted that the car’s registration had expired.
The officers conducted a traffic stop and learned the driver was on probation in a felony stalking case and there were two outstanding warrants for his arrest. They found methamphetamine hidden behind his belt buckle. A search of his vehicle yielded a black Springfield XD-45 firearm under the driver seat; it was loaded, and within the driver’s reach. Officers then searched the trunk and located a mesh bag containing one white rope, one yellow rope, one roll of black tape and one mask. The suspect was booked on numerous charges.

Hot Prowl
Chesnut and Gough
September 9, 10:01 p.m.
A woman returned home to find her garage door open. Several items were misplaced. At first she thought her husband was responsible, but when she went inside, she found a man sitting on her couch. She shouted for him to get out, then told her son to leave the house and call for help. She took photos of the intruder before waiting outside for the police. Investigating officers conducted a walk-through of the house and backyard. They opened a door in the back of the house and looked in with a flashlight. The suspect was crouching inside. The officers placed him under arrest.

Trepassing, Auto Theft
Sacramento and Octavia
September 23, 9:45 p.m.
A building manager heard banging noises and found a man who appeared to be tampering with the door of the apartment building, attempting to gain entry.
When the manager shouted at the intruder, he fled on foot. The manager then called the police and provided a description to dispatch. Shortly afterward, witnesses called 911 to report an auto burglary in progress. The witnesses’ description of the suspect matched the manager’s description of the man who had tried to break in to the building. Numerous officers responded to the call, and searched the surrounding area. They located the suspect a few blocks away at Octavia and California and detained him. He was arrested without incident.

Theft of Vehicle, Parole Violation
Brederrick and Oak
September 25, 9:08 a.m.
Officers received a call about a man who had been sleeping inside a car in a parking garage since 4 o’clock that morning. They conducted a well-being check and found the man still asleep in the driver’s seat with only one engine running. They woke him up to determine whether he was in distress and learned he was on probation. He stated that he did not know whose car it was. Additional officers visited the vehicle’s registered owner’s home. The owner did not know the man and believed his car was still parked in front of his home. The sleeping man was arrested and booked for parole violation and vehicle theft.

Carjacking
Clay and Presidio
October 5, 6:49 p.m.
A man delivering packages spotted an unknown individual getting into the driver’s seat of his car. He ran to his car and grabbed the window to keep the man from driving off. The suspect elbowed him several times to knock him off, and eventually he let go and rolled onto the ground. The thief sped away in the stolen car. He was later recovered, but no arrests have been made and the investigation continues.

Burglary
Sutter and Baker
October 9, 2:38 a.m.
A homeowner’s dog started barking in the night, so he checked to see whether anyone was in his back yard. He spotted an unknown individual behaving in a suspicious manner and called the police. As the officers arrived, they saw a man emerge from a neighbor’s house carrying a bicycle. Police talked to the neighbor, who identified the bike as his own. Officers detained the suspect and discovered that he was carrying burglary tools along with narcotics and paraphernalia. He was arrested and booked at county jail.

Burglary
Fillmore and California
October 10, 8:09 p.m.
A burglary abatement team was working in plainclothes when dispatch advised them that two people in a red SUV had just broken into a land store and was heading north on Fillmore. A few minutes later, officers spotted the SUV and conducted a felony stop. They ordered the driver to turn the engine off, but he did not comply. Officers then approached the vehicle and ordered the occupants out of the car. A witness identified the SUV as the one involved in the burglary of the land Rover. Officers determined that the SUV’s license plate had been stolen from a Toyota in Sunnydale. The suspects were placed under arrest.

Assault
Van Ness and Pina
October 12, 2:10 p.m.
A man sitting in his car in a gas station was confronted by an individual wielding a broken bottle and demanding money. When the driver refused and attempted to get away, the man hit him in the hand with the broken bottle and ran. The driver jumped out of his car and chased the suspect while calling 911. Responding officers spotted the suspect standing in front of BevMo. He fought the police as they tried to detain him but after a brief struggle, they got him into handcuffs. He was arrested and taken to county jail.

Robbery, Assault
Laguna and Union
October 13, 2:47 a.m.
A woman walked from a bar to her home and discovered she was unable to unlock her door. She fell asleep on her doorstep and was approached by an individual who assaulted her and stole her wallet. The assailant ran off and the woman flagged down a passerby, who called 911.
Three days later, at 4:30 in the morning, a second woman was walking down Fillmore near Lombard when a man approached her from behind and assaulted her. She covered her mouth when she tried to call for help. A passing truck startled her attacker, allowing the woman to break free from his grasp. She alerted the first person she encountered, who called 911.
On the following day, at 4:32 in the morning, the officer who wrote the report for the assault of the night before spotted a suspicious vehicle parked at Steiner and Pidley. A man was sleeping inside. The officer realized that the man matched the physical description given by the victim of the second assault. When he searched the vehicle he found the stolen wallet that belonged to the woman who had fallen asleep on her doorstep. Special Victims Unit investigators responded to the scene and the man was arrested.

DUI, Collision
Divisadero and Hayes
October 15, 10:38 p.m.
Officers received a call about an accident at an intersection resulting in injuries. On arrival they saw that three vehicles were involved; one with major damage and one with minor damage, as well as the car responsible for the collision. They also noted that trees growing in the median had been knocked over. Officers spoke with the driver who caused the accident and learned that he had been drinking and taking pills. He was highly agitated when they interviewed him and did not seem to know where he was. The officers could not administer the field sobriety test because the suspect passed out during the questioning. They obtained a search warrant to give him a blood test.
They then spoke with one of the drivers whose car had been struck, who reported he had seen the suspect driving erratically before the accident. When the suspect ran a red light, he had a head-on collision with another car. The driver’s vehicle and occupant had been struck was taken to the ICU with life-threatening brain injuries. The suspect will be booked when he is released from S.F. General.

Making Threats, Outstanding Warrants
Pine and Presidio
October 22, 9:18 p.m.
A woman was walking her dog when a man approached and started shooting at her. The man said he was “a b**ch” and that he was going to shoot her. The woman ran from him and called the police. Officers located the man nearby. The woman who was threatened said she had feared for her life and believed the man intended to harm her. A records check on the suspect revealed several outstanding warrants for his arrest. He was booked at county jail.

Aggravated Assault
Bush and Polk
October 26, 1 a.m.
A patron of McGreage’s Saloon pushed a woman from behind and a physical fight broke out. The altercation ended when the man broke a glass bottle against the woman’s face.
Witnesses called the police. Upon arrival, officers located the victim of the assault, who was bleeding profusely. She corroborated the story told by the two witnesses. One witness directed the officers to the suspect. As they attempted to gain his attention, he fled from the bar. Officers gave chase while requesting backup. An arriving unit cut off the suspect’s escape, and officers on foot caught him and detained him.

The woman who had been struck identified the man who attacked her, and he was placed under arrest. He had been speaking with the woman’s doctor, who stated that, although her injuries were not serious, she will have permanent scars on her face.
Fillmore: Retail Mecca?

BY CHRIS BARNETT

D

espite the fierce turnover among well-heeled retailers, is Fillmore Street still Mecca for merchants? JON LEVY, an exec with Leap — a New York-based firm that creates and launches traditional retail stores for web-based digital brands — is convinced of it. He just snapped up a second storefront on the street for a client and is gunning for a third — all in the same block.

Leap just soft-opened the women’s fashion shop ADAY at 2011 Fillmore, after the cosmetic emporium MAC vanished suddenly last month. A few months earlier, Leap opened KODA, a hip sneaker company, a few doors north at 2029 Fillmore in what was previously the LULU women’s boutique. Now Leap has its sights on the space nearby at 2033 Fillmore being vacated by MODCLOTH, the Walmart-owned apparel startup that flipped as a brick-and-mortar venture but lives online.

Leap is neither an angel investor nor a venture capitalist. Its gig: Match online retail concepts with hot locations nationwide and get them off the brick and mortar launching pad. And even with the high casualty rates on Fillmore among solidly financed, often globally owned retailers, Levy feels the street has an irresistible appeal to tech-smart, savvy-spending millennials who aren’t afraid to disrupt rules and flout traditions.

Levy maintains that ADAY is aimed at the “fashion forward yet practical” woman who looks for simplicity and versatility in her wardrobe. “This is comfortable yet technical fashion” shop. But the difference between it and Goodwill or the other pre-owned stores is that it buys men’s and women’s clothes and resells them at a profit, says manager GREGRINIA PALTRIK, and her wellness lifestyle store GOOP. The star has leased the vacated JIGSAW fashion space at 2120 Fillmore to make permanent the pop-up she tried out last year a block north by the Clay Theatre.

NO LONGER ELITE: Dragged-out negotiations between ANDY CHUN, who held the lease on the now-defunct ELITE CAFE, and serial restaurateur ADRIANO PAGANINI, have finally been resolved, sources say. The new owner of the iconic Fillmore storefront, RICK HOWARD, has just opened HARRY’S BAR next door. The Beat goes on. Send newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com or call 415-921-5092.

The nagging question: Is there a recipe for resurrecting the excitement and energy that once made this fabled Fillmore Street address a destination for the neighborhood and beyond? Look for — but don’t bet on — a January 2020 opening.

WE HARDLY KNEW YE: Walmart’s attempt to market high and cool fashions to XXS to 4X-sized women, MODCLOTH, is having a 40 percent off store closing sale at 2033 Fillmore Street. Its retail concept was gutsy: Touch and feel — and try on — the merchandise in the store, then have it FedExed to you, with nothing to buy and carry out and no immediate gratification. The store, billed as a “fitshop,” opened with fanfare last year, but now staffers have been instructed not to give details about the demise of this location, or the two others in New York and Washington, D.C. ModCloth as a brand will live on at modcloth.com.

AT THE CROSSROADS: Some muscular corporate-owned fashion chains are folding their Fillmore tents, but one homegrown entry is standing and strong. CROSSROADS, at the corner of Fillmore and Bush, is celebrating its 28th year and has spawned a nationwide chain of retail offspring. Like so many others, Crossroads bills itself as a “sustainable fashion” shop. But the difference between it and Goodwill or the other pre-owned stores is that it buys men’s and women’s clothes and re-sells them at a profit, says manager MARISA HILLS.

NOOSH NEWS: Bar boss ANDREW MELTZER is taking a break — for an entire year — to roam the world in search of new cocktail ideas. Tough duty. . . . NOOSH co-chef and partner SANYO OZU’S new lunch for his crew: 21 pizzas, with different toppings, from new neighbor up the block APIZZA. The bill for all those pies? Only $117, including a 10 percent good neighbor discount.

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

NOVEMBER 9TH • PALACE OF FINE ARTS • SF

Girls’ Festival

A day-long celebration for girls!

• All-day performances
• 40+ interactive exhibitors
• 20+ engaging workshops
• Career mentoring sessions
• Makerspace featuring everything S.T.E.A.M.
• Girlpreneur competition
• Fun fashion show with young female designers
• Girl entrepreneur Pop-Up Shop
• Sports & activity arena
• Contests and more!

Tickets range from $10 to $15 & kids under 7 are free!
A Tiny Plant Store on Tony Fillmore

BY THOMAS REYNOLDS

A neighbor, out for a walk one night soon after Plants and Friends opened its new shop at 1906 Fillmore in early October, stopped to admire the greenery in the window.

“It’s fun,” she said to another neighbor walking by. “It makes you smile.”

And so it does. Who would think — in the age of international fashion boutiques and cosmetics salons — that a tiny plant store could sprout on tony Fillmore Street?

Owner Nick Forland, that’s who. Suggest to him that he’s a dreamer for opening a petite plant store in a high-rent district and he seems completely surprised anyone could think he’s taking a risk.

“We've made a plant store work for two years in Hayes Valley,” he says with a toothy grin. “We had a test run.”

Forland and his collaborators created the first Plants and Friends shop in 2017 at 542 Laguna Street, just off Hayes, in an even smaller space. A photographer and “experiential designer,” Forland had become entranced while landscaping his own place in the Outer Sunset.

As a result, he became interested in “plants for city living” for people who don’t have the time or space for landscaping, yet want to connect to nature.

Already he and his friends are finding the new Fillmore shop attracts a much different clientele than the original Hayes Valley store.

“Hayes Valley is young — a lot of apartments with people just moving to the city,” says operations manager Harmony Corelitz. “We’re here to show we’re adults, too.”

Forland says that after he signed the lease for 1906 Fillmore — formerly an art gallery and an adjunct to the next-door jewelry shop HiHo Silver, among other things — he went across the street for a burger at Roam and marveled at his good fortune.

“Fillmore is just such an old street,” he says. “I can’t believe I’m on this street known around the world. It’s a different feeling. You just get so many people walking Fillmore.”

Naturally friends helped create the stylish and organic look of the shop.

“I wanted to replicate the feeling of being consumed by plants,” Forland says. His friend Lea Saito, an interior architect, came up with the forms of the display shelves. A welder friend created the bracketless powder-coated steel shelves. Artisan friends from New York plastered the walls the color of a blushing peach.

“It creates some beautiful effects — especially the shadows if there’s a plant in the window,” says Forland.

“Plants are not rectangles. We were trying to create more of an organic flow to the space.”

The new shop has more pots on display, many from local ceramicists, as well as refillable sacks of potting soil and fertilizer. There also are plant-based body products.

“There’s a little more breathing room,” says Forland.

And they’ve already been asked to provide plants and living walls for several local businesses.

“It’s been going well,” Forland says. “We’re like the new kid in school. Everybody has been so welcoming and friendly — every day someone new comes in.”

He finds some irony in the fact that plants are now trending online.

“On social media, plants are the craze,” Forland says. “I’m okay with buying certain things online, but not a plant. There’s the experience of going into a plant shop where you can feel the environment. You could be inspired.”

Especially given his background in experiential events, Forland is planning fun and photographable celebrations at the shop, including plant propagation parties.

And then there are the possibilities with cannabis. He’s looking now for new holiday gifts, including something called A Pot for Pot.

“We’re always exploring new products,” Forland says, flashing another grin.
More Than a Few of Her Favorite Things

 Chandlier Tang is living her dream — curating and stocking what she describes as “very fun things” for Post Script, a new shop she’s just opened in a neighborhood she knows and loves. Tang describes her new endeavor at 2413 California Street, near Fillmore — most recently habited by the women’s clothing boutique De Novo — as a “lifestyle store” that focuses on small goods.

The offerings are an eclectic mix of mostly hand-crafted items including pillows, throws, soap, candles, planners, bowls, art books, towels and jewelry, along with greeting cards ranging from nice to naughty. Somehow the mix seems unified, no doubt due to Tang’s buying philosophy: “I really just look for a sense of colors and designs that can enrich your every day,” she says.

Days before opening, Tang wanders about the space, newly brightened by refinished floors and a coat of white paint on the walls, one of them adorned with a mural by local artist Katie Benn.

It’s also clear there’s another unifying force: She’s stocked up on services — in which her shop is located. After stints at mega-retailers Sephora and Levi’s and a few start-ups, she says she was eager to try something on her own.

Sephora and Levi’s and a few start-ups, she says she was

Tang describes her new shop Post Script has just opened.

“Each item and maker has a unique story,” she says. “Like these Handuri notebooks, made by two sisters in the Korean tradition of bookmaking. They’re crafted from birch trees — and the birch grows back,” she says.

Tang has sourced items spanning 50 brands from craft shows, online sites and friends who are launching their own businesses — including one she met years ago in art camp, who now manufactures and cleverly packages pencils. “She’s become the Pencil Queen,” Tang says.

Tang is a San Francisco native who attended the neighborhood’s Hamlin School. Her family owns the building in which her shop is located. After stints at mega-retailers Sephora and Levi’s and a few start-ups, she says she was eager to try something on her own.

“I’ve always had this in the back of my mind,” she says, surveying her new shop just days before it opened. “There’s a lot of fashion and clothing on the street now. I hope my shop fills a needed niche.”

Post Script is slated to be open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tang plans to be on site most of the time. “For now, I want to be the face of the store — to meet my customers, to get that personal touch,” she says.

Do you need legal counsel?

We invite you to contact us.

Our first client conference is without charge. We work on a contingency or billable basis to make our services affordable to you.

Representation in trials, arbitrations, mediations and appeals of all civil disputes. This is what we do.

Guy O. Kornblum

- Certified in Civil Trial and Pretrial Practice Advocacy
- National Board of Trial Advocacy
- Top 100 Trial Lawyers

Guy Kornblum and his wife, Victoria, live in the neighborhood and raised their two children here.

Kornblum, Cochran, Erickson & Harbison, LLP

1388 Sutter Street, Suite 505, San Francisco, CA 94109 415.640.7900
50 Old Courthouse Square, Suite 601, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 707.544.9006

www.kcehlaw.com

Insurance and Injury Claims • Business Disputes

Ellder Abuse • Medical and Legal Malpractice

November 2019 NEW FILMORE
Farmer’s Market Loses a Pioneer

Produce from Terry Farms, picked just the day before, made its final appearance at the Fillmore Farmers Market on November 2 after owner Albert Terry died earlier in the week.

He was one of the original vendors when the market started in 2003 in the parking lot at Fillmore and Eddy, later to become the site of the Fillmore Heritage Center.

“He was there from the beginning,” said his daughter Lisa Terry-Walters. He had learned about the new market as a board member of the sponsoring Pacific Coast Farmers Market Association.

“After going himself for the first couple of years, he started sending employees,” she said, but they soon wanted to quit. “It wasn’t worth it because they weren’t making enough even to cover the cost of going.”

So Terry started coming to Fillmore again and established an easy rapport with customers and the other farmers.

“He always knew that Fillmore was a special deal, and it became a market that was very personal for him,” his daughter said. “This is the only market he attended regularly himself.”

Terry Farms specialized in peaches — especially white varietals and old-fashioned clings — and pluots. In the fall there were grapes, pomegranates, and persimmons.

A decade ago, Terry asked his son-in-law, the tough ex-Marine Ephriam Walters, to come with him to Fillmore. “So I cancelled my fishing trip and came,” Walters said. For the past five years, Walters has been in charge, and has built a strong base of customers who return every week for his fresh fruit and no-nonsense approach.

“When I got out of the Marines, it was hard for me to transition,” Walters said on his final Saturday morning at the Fillmore market, as he bade farewell to his regulars. “This market has helped me. It has changed so much, but a lot of these people I’ve been dealing with for 10 years.”

Walters said the market paid Terry’s medical bills in recent years as he battled heart disease and had to stay close to the ranch he farmed for 51 years in Denair, in Stanislaus County.

Now the family is putting the farm on the market.

“Our family is very hopeful the farm will be purchased by another farmer who will continue to be as passionate about the products the farm produces as my dad was,” said Terry’s daughter, and Ephriam’s wife, Lisa. “With any luck, they will be able to attend the Fillmore market.”
By Fran Moreland Johns

At age 98, Rita Semel doesn’t waste time worrying about retirement. “Some time ago, I went to my friend Pam David’s ‘rewiring party,’” she says. “And I thought: That’s what I’m going to do. I’m not retiring, I’m rewiring.” That decision was good news for the neighborhood — and far beyond. Semel talked about her rewired history, current activities and life in general recently during a rare quiet moment in her apartment overlooking Lafayette Park.

“When Max [her husband of 51 years] died in 1994, I looked around at our 1902 Victorian in the Castro — 17 steps to the front door, 17 steps to the basement — and said, ‘What am I doing here?’” she recalls. “Though I hated leaving the Castro, I knew a couple of people in this building, so I put my name on the list.” It soon became home.

Semel loves Lafayette Park, but best of all her not-so-new-anymore address is ideally located to access her main centers of volunteer activity: Grace Cathedral, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, where the San Francisco Interfaith Council regularly meets, and Temple Emanu-El. These locales, plus City Hall, command much of her attention.

“I am fascinated being on the boards of Grace and Emanu-El at the same time,” Semel says. She is a long-time congregant of Temple Emanu-El, as well as an enthusiastic supporter of the social justice ministries at Grace Cathedral and other Christian faith communities. The S.F. Interfaith Council, which established the Rita R. Semel Endowment Fund in her honor several years ago, is among the most significant accomplishments of her rewiring.

In December 1988, then mayor Art Agnos asked a group of clergy to help with the city’s homeless population during an exceptionally cold and wet winter. A committee was formed, and shelters were opened at Calvary Presbyterian Church on Fillmore, Grace Cathedral, Old First Presbyterian Church and Old St. Mary’s Cathedral. The shelters closed in February 1989.

Then the ’89 Loma Prieta earthquake struck, and Agnos again appealed to the interfaith group for help. Calvary’s pastor, Jim Emerson, helped secure relief money from Church World Service, and a number of faith communities went to work. But Semel says she recalls telling the group of co-workers: “We can’t keep setting up committees every time something happens. We need to organize.”

Rewired, Not Retired

Rita Semel, co-founder of the S.F. Interfaith Council, is a force for good

She and a colleague, Mary Culp, went to meet with the Marin Interfaith Council, and the San Francisco Interfaith Council was born. Its original prime movers were Semel, Culp and Emerson.

Since Michael Pappas was hired as the group’s executive director in 2007 — a post Semel filled as a volunteer for more than a decade while the board and organization grew — the council has become a major force for good. It continues to sponsor the annual Winter Shelter, which provides food and shelter for 100 homeless men during the winter months, as well as other community projects.

Semel has known great joy with the success of the interfaith council and other endeavors. But in her 98 years she has also known great sorrow. Her younger daughter Jane died in a tragic accident shortly before her 18th birthday.

“It was the most devastating thing that ever happened,” Semel says. And when older daughter Elisabeth came home from Bard College and didn’t want to go back, Semel was inconsolable. “But my very wise husband said one day: ‘If we want to honor Jane, we have to go on with our lives. We have to give back.’”

Semel has proceeded to do just that through her many volunteer activities. Daughter Elisabeth (“Don’t get me started,” her mom says, “I am so proud”) is the founding director of the Berkeley Law Death Penalty Clinic and a nationally recognized expert on capital punishment.

Born and raised in New York, Rita Semel first came to San Francisco with her parents in 1939. After graduating from Barnard College, she married and traveled with her soldier husband until he was shipped overseas in World War II. She worked as a “copy girl” and then a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle, later becoming the first associate editor of the newly established Jewish Community Bulletin.

After daughter Elisabeth’s birth in 1950, Semel retired from the Bulletin and began doing freelance public relations for the March of Dimes, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Israeli consulate. In 1964, she served on the committee that organized the San Francisco Conference on Religion and Race, then became its coordinator for the next 25 years. She later was associate director and then executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Semel has a wildly diverse assortment of honors and activities. Among them: She’s on the board of Catholic Charities CYO Family Services America, co-founder of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio and has been honored as a pioneer of the Islamic Society of San Francisco and United Muslims of America.

In addition to faith communities, she has long been active in civic affairs. Asked to name a favorite cause in that area, she says: “It’s hard to choose. But one would be being on the S.F. Human Services Commission, and our in-home supportive services. We serve people on Medi-Cal, keeping them in their homes.”

Semel has several pearls of wisdom about living well to age 98. “Keep busy,” she says. “And don’t leave things for someone else — because if you don’t do it, who will?”

post.script.

A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD SHOP FOR STATIONERY, ACCESSORIES, AND HOME GOODS

WWW.PS-SF.COM            @POST.SCRIPT.SF

November 2019 NEW FILLMORE 9
3rd I Filmfest Returns to Japantown

**By Andrea Chase**

**FILM**

*The 3rd I Film Festival* continues its mission of presenting a selection of films from Southeast Asia at Japantown’s New People on November 10, with four programs and a return master class from filmmaker Nishtha Jain.

In the master class, at 12:30 p.m., Jain will share her process as well as clips from her award-winning documentaries addressing human rights issues, including *City of Photos*, *Lakshmi and Me*, *At My Doorstep*, and *Gulabi Gang* — as well as her work-in-progress *The Golden Thread*, about the dying jute industry and its effects on the community that relies on it. She will also share her first narrative film, a short about misogyny in medicine.

*Chippa* (2:30 p.m.) from Safdar Rahman follows the 10-year-old title character as he spends a long night celebrating his birthday by searching through the streets of Kolkata for his absent father. It’s a place of poverty and struggle, but also a place of love and family tradition, a struggling music career and a new, non-Bengalis girlfriend who has swept him off his feet.

*Bangla* (4:30 p.m.) introduces viewers to the Bangladeshi community in Rome. Starring its director and co-writer Phaim Pawar in an endearing performance, this charming comedy shows how he tries to balance family life. The film balances heartwarming without being naive, it features Sunny Pawar in an enduring performance.

*Coast to Coast: Mumbai to the Mission* (6:45 p.m.) is a shorts program that includes comedy with:

- *The Iceman*, a deliciously wry parsing of cultural stereotypes.
- *Andrew Strum’s “31 Foot Ladders*,” about a company taking economic advantage of Trump’s 30-foot border wall.
- *Omar Khan and Simon Rynings’ “The Plunge,”* about a third date gone askew.
- *Mahesh Paloor’s “Mona Shaikh: Comedian,”* a mini-doc about the Pakistani-American comedian’s approach to comedy and life.

It also takes on serious issues in *“When the Dust Came In: Mongolian Herders Negotiate Their Future With a Massive Mine,”* another mini-doc about nomadic herders negotiating a way to continue with their way of life when the Oyu Tolgoi mine arrived. *Sivaranjani and Two Other Women* (8:30 p.m.) delivers an anthology of three women living in Tamil Nadu. The three inhabit different decades, starting in 1980, and director Vasanth uses the progression of those decades to explore what does and doesn’t change for everyday women living in a crushing patriarchy. It is a masterpiece of small but momentous moments, with performances from the lead actresses (Kalieaswari Srinivasan, Parvathy, Lakshmi Priya Chandramoorthi) meticulously honed for maximum emotional impact without histrionics.

For ticketing and more information about the 3rd I Film Festival, go to thirdi.org.

148,000 calls every year. But our most important one is from you.

**Q & A**

A celebration of South Asia

THE 3RD I Film Festival’s specific mission is “to reflect the lives and experiences of the many ethnic, religious and national identities that comprise the South Asian identity, and to promote worldwide interaction about it.” Festival executive director and co-founder Ivan Jaigirdar recently mused about fulfilling that mission at this year’s event.

Are there particular issues or concerns that influence the films you select for the festival?

Films that are celebrating the diversity of the South Asian community and surreptitiously working at exploring challenges and bridging differences are what we try and focus on.

Nishta Jain is returning to do another master class. What is the importance of including something like that in the festival — and with Jain in particular?

We always try to bring up topics that are in the cultural zeitgeist. Films and filmmakers mirror a lot of the pressing social and political issues, and Nishta Jain has consistently done that in her films. I believe we’ve shown most, if not all, of her films throughout the years. So a master class with Nishta is a great opportunity for us all to learn about filmmaking and social and political issues, including the #metoo movement in India.

Are there films you would highlight? Chopra, Bangla and 3rd I’s signature collection of shorts, titled “Coast to Coast, Mumbai to the Mission,” are all worth checking out. They all feature comedic fun and also have strong social messages. It’s been great to have some lighter and more humorous films with a message at the festival.

For 45 years, the Friendship Line has been making human connections with isolated and lonely older adults. Each month this call center, the only accredited line in the nation, receives an average of 12,000 calls and over 148,000 a year. Help us continue to make life-changing human connections at www.ioaaging.org/donate or call (415) 750-4142.

For information on the 3rd I Film Festival, visit thirdi.org.

---

© 2019, AgeOn: Institute on Aging

---

**Film**

*Bangla* explores the Bangladeshi community in Rome.
One of the neighborhood’s enduring architectural treasures has been resurrected and a mystery is solved — almost.

The 107-year-old Beaux Arts four-story Health Sciences Library on the corner of Webster and Sacramento — which gave refuge to the smart and studious for decades, but has stood empty collecting cobwebs for the last five years — is being reborn as a venue for “mission-based” organizations and groups looking for conference and symposium space.

A designated San Francisco landmark once known as the Lane Library, the building at 2395 Sacramento Street is now owned by entrepreneurial software executive-turned-humanitarian Kamal El-Wattar and his wife, Anya, a Michelin starred chef, restaurateur and wellness advocate. The couple bought it more than two years ago for a reported $9.5 million, but have been silent on their plans for the property. Until now.

Kamal El-Wattar heads a nonprofit called The Answers Project that goes far afield for existential truths. Project researchers once trekked to Borneo to question the elders of an Indonesian culture about their life, philosophy and happiness. He is also a board member of the Biomimicry Institute, a low-to-no-profile think tank of sorts probing how technology and nature can be combined to resolve environmental problems.

Anya El-Wattar is an activist and artist who runs a local nonprofit, Project Butterfly Social, that also creates food events. They live in the neighborhood.

The building the couple now owns has a rich heritage. It was designed in 1912 by San Francisco architect Albert Pissis, who also designed Temple Sherith Israel, which shares the block. The high-ceilinged structure was initially owned by Cooper Medical College, the first medical school in the West, which opened in a Victorian brick building across the street in 1882.

Stanford University acquired the Cooper complex to serve as its medical school from 1908 to 1956, when the Stanford hospital moved to Palo Alto. The complex was then expanded and became the Presbyterian Medical Center. In the early 1990s, it became the California Pacific Medical Center.

For decades, the library was shared by students at the University of the Pacific’s dental school, then located diagonally across from the library. Students used the library as a reading room and study hall until the dental school relocated downtown five years ago. Its neighborhood home was gutted and converted into The Pacific, a 77-unit condominium complex at Webster and Sacramento.

To help bring the library back to life, the El-Wattars hired a Washington, D.C., firm, Bond Events, to produce gatherings. The grandly stated mission: to make the century-old building the Bay Area’s go-to spot to “grow, meet, learn, discover and make history.”

A website shows off the space and the firm’s promotional prowess. The library, once filled with shelves and stacks piled high with musty books and instructional videos, today looks positively palatial, with a wide, sweeping staircase connecting the main three floors of the building, which was completed in 1912 and is a historic landmark.

The historic Medical Science Library at Sacramento and Webster Streets is now known simply as The Library. Top, the majestic former reading room is now available as an event space. Right, a curving staircase connects the main three floors of the building, which was completed in 1912 and is a historic landmark.

By Chris Barnett

New Life FOR AN Old Library

In 1948, Dailey was hired by the American Red Cross to design the building for its new headquarters in San Francisco. Sited on Sutter Street between two established hotels, the Queen Anne and the Majestic, the building was a sharp contrast to its older neighbors. A thoroughly modern edifice, the building was featured and described in the moma publication, which noted it had “grey concrete walls poured in V-joined tongue and groove boards, set vertically, to produce a finely ribbed surface texture. Interior offices open on a central court; on the top floor, adjoining a sundeck, there is an auditorium which is also used as an employees’ cafeteria.”

Dailey, a Minnesotan by birth, relocated to California in 1915 at the age of 20, but quickly traveled to Costa Rica, where he was hired to build houses for banana plantation workers. After receiving accolades for service in World War I, which left him blind in one eye, Dailey enrolled at UC Berkeley in 1919 to study economics. By 1921 he had transferred to Stanford, then finally completed his course work in structural engineering at San Francisco’s Heald College. By 1927, after a European sojourn, Dailey had earned an architectural certificate and opened his own San Francisco office.

The following year, Dailey designed one of his first projects, an addition to the Victorian-era Haas-Lilienthal House on Franklin Street for Samuel and Alice Haas Lilienthal. His early works were fairly traditional, often conjuring various revivalist styles. However, by 1935, Dailey had fully embraced Modernism. Over the next decade, Dailey established himself as a capable designer. He worked on many residential projects, including a dramatic modern house on Russian Hill’s Montclair Terrace, which has been altered over time, and a home for Ernest Gallo in Modesto.

In the late 1930s, he designed the Berliner House at 120 Commonwealth Avenue in Jordan Park, which apparently caused quite a stir given its drastic difference from the traditional architecture of its neighbors.

Between 1937 and 1940, Dailey designed three houses on Normandie Terrace, a dead end block terminating at a set of stairs situated between Broadway and Vallejo, just west of Scott Street, in the heart of Pacific Heights. Many of Dailey’s residential projects during this era were...
photographed by the now famous architectural photographer Rodger Sturtevant, including several of these houses.

The pre-war period culminated with a 1938 Woodside house that secured Dailey first prize in a House Beautiful competition for its modern aesthetic.

Just before the U.S. entered World War II, Dailey was awarded a commission to design Brazil’s pavilion at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, which included a glass wall not unlike his later Red Cross Building.

In 1941, as war became a reality, Dailey completed the house at 2674 Broadway, near the apex of the hill at Divisadero Street, the front facade of which is also dominated by a great expanse of glass. Designed for Walter Heil, who had been director of the de Young Museum and the regional director of the federal Public Works of Art project in the 1930s. Dailey’s collaborator for the Heil House was famed landscape architect Thomas Church.

During the war, Dailey applied for and was granted a patent for the stressed skin roof and for its integration in unit construction. After the war, he was selected by the American Battle Monuments Commission to design the Pacific War Memorial in Manila, the Philippines. His much-touted project for the Red Cross was designed just after the war ended. The publicity likely spurred other commissions. A project at 1 Raycliff Terrace for Joan and Robert Sinton, a brokerage executive and prominent member of San Francisco’s Jewish community, was completed in 1951. Situated on a corner lot, the house marks the entry to the cul-de-sac featuring a grouping of mid-century houses, including one by Joe Esherick and two by Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons.

During the late 1940s and into the 1950s, Dailey completed a number of projects for the Matson Company in San Francisco and Hawaii, including several hotels. In addition, he designed several buildings at Woodside’s Filoli after Lurline and William Roth purchased the famous estate from the Bourn family. In the later 1950s and early 1960s, Dailey did a fair amount of work at the University of California, Berkeley and at Stanford University.

In 1961, Dailey married his long-time secretary, Lucille Downey, in a New York ceremony. The architect Edward Durrell Stone was his best man and hosted a reception after the nuptials. Sadly, just a few years later, Dailey’s health began to decline, including a brain ailment that he never fully disclosed to close friends or associates. On October 24, 1967, Dailey took his own life, leaping from the Golden Gate Bridge.

Dailey’s associates continued his work and practice. The Red Cross Building, which was a truly modern building, was lost to the wrecking ball in 2001 to accommodate the Coventry Park assisted living facility. The old kxcm television studio building at 1001 Van Ness Avenue, which was being completed by Dailey when he died, is now being demolished.
## Market sending mixed messages

ALTHOUGH RESIDENTIAL property sales in the neighborhood have reached the highest level since before the last recession and the market remains healthy, certain factors indicate buyer sentiment has tempered. There were 39 single-family home and condominium sales in Pacific Heights, Lower Pacific Heights, Cow Hollow and Presidio Heights between mid-September and mid-October — traditionally one of the year’s busiest real estate seasons. Even given seasonal trends, activity in the neighborhood was up by 34.5 percent from the same time in the previous two years, reaching the highest level for that time period since 2004.

The city’s most desirable real estate is still in demand, with two-thirds of local sales commanding premiums this fall. But headlines that warn of an impending recession and slipping consumer confidence may have caused some potential buyers to pause. And while traffic for most open houses remains solid, real estate professionals report that buyers seem less urgent than in previous months, thanks in part to more inventory coming onto the market. This minor market kink might not last. But it could offer motivated home shoppers the opportunity to avoid contingency clauses and bidding wars while their more cautious competitors wait it out.

---

Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER at compass Real Estate.
The Best 10 Years of My Life

By Joel Berge

I have so many fond memories of the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill that I could write a book. [See “PacBag Was the Local Gathering Place,” October New Fillmore.]

First off, the PacBag was the PacBag because of owners Susie and Craig Bashel, two of the greatest people I have ever met, let alone had the honor to work for. All the great events we had and the loyal clientele that supported us were due to the good will of those two people. I cannot say enough kind things about them and I miss them dearly.

I spent the best decade of my life on the corner of Pine and Fillmore — and also maybe the toughest 10 years of my life. We had so many great times at that bar most people called the “Cheers” of San Francisco. All the same guests would come night after night and relish the day’s events, and it was not uncommon for us to hang out together on our days off. We all really enjoyed each other’s company.

I threw an annual Thanksgiving dinner at my home every year for all the misfits who had no family, or no place to go. It ended up being quite an ordeal. I think I had 50 guests the last couple years. They were by far my favorite Thanksgivings to date.

We would buy blocks of Giants tickets and meet at the bar on a Sunday morning for Bloody Marys, then jump on a chartered bus and head to Candlestick to tailgate and spend a day of fun in the sun. The earthquake, the long-armed baskets heaped with the long green. And in those days there was the “AIDS thing” going on. But it was most likely guilt, not conscience, that stuffed the coffers.

I suppose it did not matter, for money is a measure of sincerity.

At the time I was not well fixed, and practicality has never been my long suit. But I was walking in a $200 pair of shoes and wearing a $50 necklace. And now I had an $8 glass of Cabernet sitting in front of me. I asked the bartender if it was that twice. Of the gathered crowd I was one of the minions. If I tipped slowly, I could ride this for another couple of hours.

The crowd thinned at about 10 and I called out with a generous tip, about the same as I put into the long arm of guilt. I left with $6. Pathetic, I know. But I wanted to see it through. I hung my clothes not so neatly. I was drunk in some indefinable way, not the .08% way.

I did not fully believe Mother Teresa, my shoes, the oysters, the necklace. And I didn’t care about lepers or orphans in Calcutta. I lit a cigarette and turned on the 10 o’clock news.

We used to water at the same well, the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill, after work. That place was the neighborhood bar, but not one of your yahoo show-your-ass joints. It was real. It had the odor of privilege, but it didn’t stink. And it was home-like.

I once excused herself to the ladies room, leaving her checkbook open. And I knew this one person or another who was sitting at hand could see the check stubs. Written to “Friends of the Committee for (name your politician).”

She was a large and voluptuous woman — fun and funny — and a conniving bitch. A little girl wanting to be grown up. She wanted to prove something to Paris, Texas, her hometown. But mostly she wanted to prove something to herself.

So interesting, this business of being alive.

— Ronald Hobbs

FIRST PERSON

Watering at the same well

The PLACE WAS jammed, the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill. We had just come from St. Dominic’s after listening to Mother Teresa speak of terrible sufferings in Calcutta. During the offertory, the long-armed baskets heaped with the long green. And in those days there was the “AIDS thing” going on. But it was most likely guilt, not conscience, that stuffed the coffers.

I suppose it did not matter, for money is a measure of sincerity.

At the time I was not well fixed, and practicality has never been my long suit. But I was walking in a $200 pair of shoes and wearing a $50 necklace. And now I had an $8 glass of Cabernet sitting in front of me. I asked the bartender if it was that twice. Of the gathered crowd I was one of the minions. If I tipped slowly, I could ride this for another couple of hours.

The crowd thinned at about 10 and I called out with a generous tip, about the same as I put into the long arm of guilt. I left with $6. Pathetic, I know. But I wanted to see it through. I hung my clothes not so neatly. I was drunk in some indefinable way, not the .08% way.

I did not fully believe Mother Teresa, my shoes, the oysters, the necklace. And I didn’t care about lepers or orphans in Calcutta. I lit a cigarette and turned on the 10 o’clock news.

BIG BUTTERFLY paint-dipped Ruth Dewson (above) was a lost soul in a sleek red Cadilac. She did nails and eyebrows before she got into hats. Hats made her famous.

We used to water at the same well, the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill, after work. That place was the neighborhood bar, but not one of your yahoo show-your-ass joints. It was real. It had the odor of privilege, but it didn’t stink. And it was home-like.

I once excused herself to the ladies room, leaving her checkbook open. And I knew this one person or another who was sitting at hand could see the check stubs. Written to “Friends of the Committee for (name your politician).”

She was a large and voluptuous woman — fun and funny — and a conniving bitch. A little girl wanting to be grown up. She wanted to prove something to Paris, Texas, her hometown. But mostly she wanted to prove something to herself.

So interesting, this business of being alive.

— Ronald Hobbs

November 2019 NEW FILLMORE 15
Get a head start to finding your home.

Access thousands of new listings before anyone else, only at compass.com.

123 Woodward Avenue, Sausalito
4 Bed | 5 Bath | $4,750,000
123woodward-sausalito.com
Marsha Williams
415.533.1894
DRE 0187693

1960 Broadway #5, Pacific Heights
3 Bed | 3 Bath | $4,250,000
1960broadway6.com
Thomas Cooke
415.823.1624
DRE 01200062

1821 Ralston Avenue, Burlingame
5 Bed | 3.5 Bath | $3,788,000
182ralston.com
Patricia Lawton
415.309.7836
DRE 01233061

1080 Chestnut Street #11D, Russian Hill
3 Bed | 3.5 Bath | $3,575,000
1080chestnut-11d.com
Marsha Williams
415.533.1894
DRE 0187693

704 Ashbury Street, Haight Ashbury
6 Bed | 2 Bath | $2,999,000
704ashbury.com
Marsha Williams
415.533.1894
DRE 0187693

1925 Gough Street #11, Pacific Heights
3 Bed | 2 Bath | $2,995,000
1925gough-11.com
Patricia Lawton
415.309.7836
DRE 01233061

681 10th Avenue, Inner Richmond
5 Bed | 3.5 Bath | $2,249,000
681-10thavenue.com
Jenett Nazzel
415.244.9404
DRE 01371061

744 Fell Street, Alamo Square
4 Bed | 2.5 Bath | $1,695,000
compass.com
Jenett Nazzel
415.244.9404
DRE 01371061

450 Los Palmos Drive, Miraloma Park
3 Bed | 2 Bath | $1,295,000
lovelylospelmos.com
Judson Gregory
415.752.5505
DRE 01936073

2109,2117,2119 14th Avenue, Golden Gate Heights
3 Homes | Starting at $1,250,000
14thavenueviewhomes.com
Robert Vernon
415.595.9357
DRE 01195165

307 Page Street #1, Hayes Valley
2 Bed | 1 Bath | $988,000
307pagesstreet1.com
Alice Alioto
415.640.5260
DRE 01518008

201 Sansome Street #404, Financial District
1 Bed | 1 Bath | $950,000
theloyal404.com
Cara Mia Lembi
415.786.5995
DRE 01972568