

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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New **FILLMORE**

SAN FRANCISCO ■ OCTOBER 2006



Rampaging
Driver Leaves
Local Scars

A month after tragedy,
one victim is recovering

By BARBARA KATE REPA

THERE ARE TWO entries for August 29 on Richard Hilkert's well-penciled calendar. One is an appointment for a midday massage — a 78th birthday present from a friend who's a masseur.

The other says simply: Horror. Hilkert, a longtime neighborhood fixture, was one of more than a dozen local residents run down and injured by an out-of-control driver on August 29. It was a bizarre incident that landed the neighborhood in the national news.

Hilkert was returning home from his massage early that Tuesday afternoon when he saw a man lying in the street at Sutter and Steiner. "He was moaning and groaning, and I thought, 'Oh, there's some poor fellow who's down and out,' " he says. Others were helping, so Hilkert continued on his way.

"I was into the crosswalk, when suddenly this car came right at me — and I joined the other fellow, on my back, in the street," his glasses and hearing aids scattered, Hilkert recalls.

Neighbors and bystanders quickly gathered.

"Then one of them screamed: 'My God! He's coming back!' " Hilkert says. "I saw the car make a U-turn at Fillmore and come back to finish us off."

Selfless souls in the crowd dragged Hilkert to safety just as the black SUV sped down the street.

The car careened through the streets of Pacific Heights and the Western Addition, sometimes veering onto the sidewalk in an apparent attempt to target a particular pedestrian, sometimes circling around to take another pass at those already hit.

In half an hour, the driver had cut a swath through the immediate neighborhood, leaving a trail of injured people and bloodstained sidewalks — and clusters of shaken residents, merchants and onlookers. The bloody spree was widely covered, and a number of neighbors were spotlighted in newspaper articles and on television broadcasts.

The driver, later identified as 29-year-old Omeed Aziz Popal, was eventually

'The greatest photographer of the nude'

Photograph ©
RUTH BERNHARD
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So said Ansel Adams about Ruth Bernhard, one of the top photographers of all time, who has lived in the neighborhood since 1953 and did much of her most important work here. As she approaches her 101st birthday this month, her biographer tells her remarkable story — her birth in Germany, her discovery of photography in New York, her fateful encounter with legendary photographer Edward Weston on the beach in Santa Monica — and her half-century in the neighborhood in a Victorian flat on Clay Street. **STORY, Page 9**

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This Month

IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



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Through October 31 at Zinc Details, 2410 California St.

Trained as a city planner, Bay Area photographer Marc Babsin takes an urbanist's eye to big architectural projects, including "Calatrava," above.

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More information: 931-2294

MURDER BY THE BAY

Author Charles F. Adams on his new book
San Francisco Historical Society
Tues., Oct. 10, 7:30 p.m.
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2130 Fillmore Street #202 • San Francisco, CA 94115
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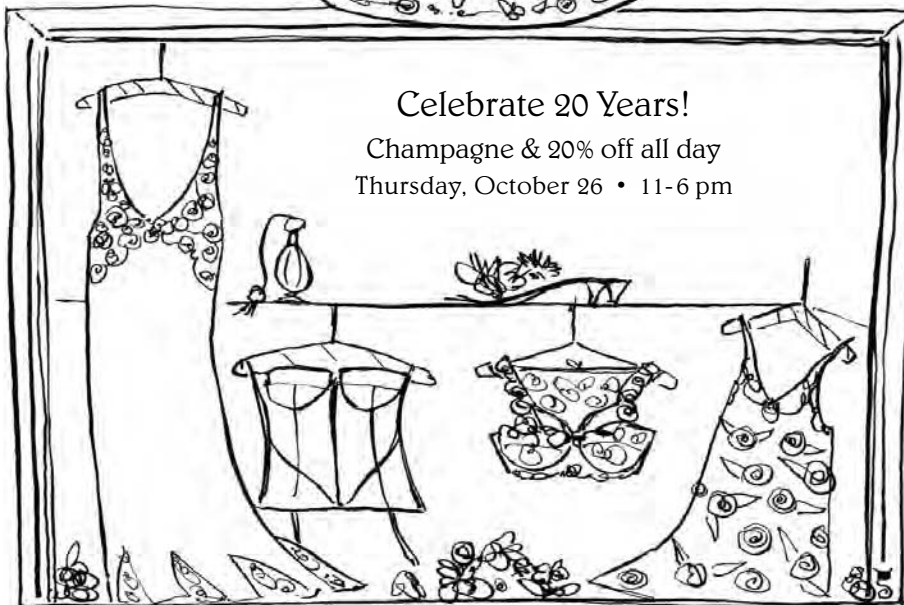
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Neighbors Lambaste Hospital's Expansion Plans

By DON LANGLEY

A consultant for California Pacific Medical Center, opening a community meeting September 19 about the hospital's \$1 billion expansion plans, acknowledged that many were attending to express their anger, and he said he was prepared for it.

He got an earful.

Ralph Marchese, president of Marchese Company, which has been working with the hospital in planning its future, acknowledged there were issues on which the hospital and the neighbors would disagree.

He ticked off a list of problems for which solutions or mitigation would be needed, including traffic, parking, shadows on neighboring homes, air quality during

the demolition and reconstruction process, impact on property values — even the possibility of disturbing the foundations of houses.

Marchese tried to explain the environmental impact report process and why hospital officials had included the maximum possible expansion in its plans. But he was unable to get through his presentation before angry neighbors began interrupting.

His list of issues did not include the one that most angered them, which is the fact the hospital is expanding in the neighborhood at all.

Ian Berke, a resident of Clay Street, said the hospital's underlying idea for years has been to increase its size.

"Neighbors want to see a reduction,"

Berke said. "They will not sit still for intensification."

Several people objected to the hospital's plans to increase research in the area instead of moving it to Mission Bay. A resident of the 2400 block of Clay Street said he didn't want "animal rights people or radiation or carcinogens across the street" from his house.

Many argued against any increase in the size of the Pacific Heights complex after acute care is moved to Cathedral Hill.

Marchese tried to regain control of the meeting by saying, "We need to enter into a relationship and a dialogue. We don't control our destiny." He noted that the city places many requirements on the hospital.

He asked the neighbors to "move be-

yond anger." But they didn't.

Ralph Romberg, who lives on Clay Street in the block above the hospital, said that the discussion was emotional because "the hospital has no credibility in this neighborhood." Romberg said he has just sold his home, partly because of frustration with the hospital over the years. Before the sale closed, he said, two potential offers were withdrawn when he disclosed the hospital's plans.

He warned Marchese that neighborhood opposition can delay the project for years. The audience applauded, as they did for many of the outbursts.

Marchese said he hopes to have more specifics about the hospital's proposals by the end of the year.

City Wrestles With Rules for Adding Garages

Building permits to add garages are no longer being issued routinely by the Planning Department, leaving the Planning Commission wrestling with a new policy on when garages can be added.

Zoning Administrator Larry Badiner presented a draft proposal to the commission on September 8. The public weighed in at the commission's September 14 meeting, with comment divided between preservationists on one side and developers and homeowners on the other.

The issue is whether homeowners ought to be able to create off-street parking or whether adding garages to Victorian homes is destroying the historic fabric of San Francisco neighborhoods.

Badiner said the agency is becoming more conscious of the city's history and the staff has become more cautious in issuing garage permits. He said there are now no formal guidelines. Among the considerations are the placement of the garage and the curb cut, whether street trees are affected, the width of the door and whether the garage entrance is near public transit.

"A curb cut privatizes public space," Badiner noted.

One of the toughest situations, Badiner said, is when a bay window extends to the ground and must be cut so a garage can go under it.

A consideration in Pacific Heights, he said, is whether a driveway should be cut into a block with consistent landscaping and setbacks.



SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

'Grand survivors' on house tour

Interiors of some of the grand homes of Pacific Heights — all survivors of the 1906 earthquake and fire — will be open for public viewing on Sunday afternoon, October 15, during the Victorian Alliance's annual house tour.

"Grand Survivors of Pacific Heights East" is the name of this year's tour. The area was chosen in observance of the earthquake and fire centennial. Some of the stately homes, including the ones pictured above on Gough Street, escaped the great fire by only a block. (That's the remains of the Fairmont Hotel on Nob Hill in the background.)

The tour begins at 1980 California Street, where tickets may be purchased on the day of the tour. Until October 1, tickets cost \$20 by mail. After October 1 the price is \$25. Send a check and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to The Victorian Alliance, c/o Bill Campbell, 4272 25th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. More information is available by calling 826-1437 or visiting www.victorianalliance.org.

The Victorian Alliance is a nonprofit organization founded in 1973 to encourage the preservation of San Francisco's Victorian buildings.

Fillmore Stroll Celebrates Indian Summer

Fillmore Street merchants from Jackson to Geary are staging an Indian Summer Stroll — another of their quarterly low-key street parties — on Saturday, October 7, from noon to 6 p.m.

As is customary with these events, balloons tied to parking meters will add a festive note and musicians — jazz, of course — will play throughout the afternoon.

Each business will participate in its own way, some with sidewalk sales, some with food or beverages, some with trunk shows.

Here's a sampling of some of the activities planned:

- Margaret O'Leary, at 2400 Fillmore, will showcase a jewelry trunk show with an Indian Summer theme. Wine and treats will be served.

- The Junior League's Next-to-New Shop, at 2226 Fillmore, will serve tea and cookies to all who stop by the consignment boutique.

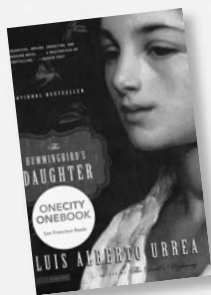
- Vivande Porta Via, at 2125 Fillmore, will offer a flight of Italian wines at the Piccolo Wine Bar, accompanied by a small sampler plate of Italian cuisine, from 2 to 6 p.m.

- Cafe Kati, at 1963 Sutter, will host a wine tasting with free appetizers, including won ton sushi cones and Vietnamese-style mango and papaya spring rolls.

- Zinc Details at both its locations, 1905 Fillmore and 2410 California, will provide wine, cheese and goodie bags from 5 to 7 p.m.

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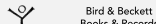
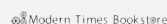
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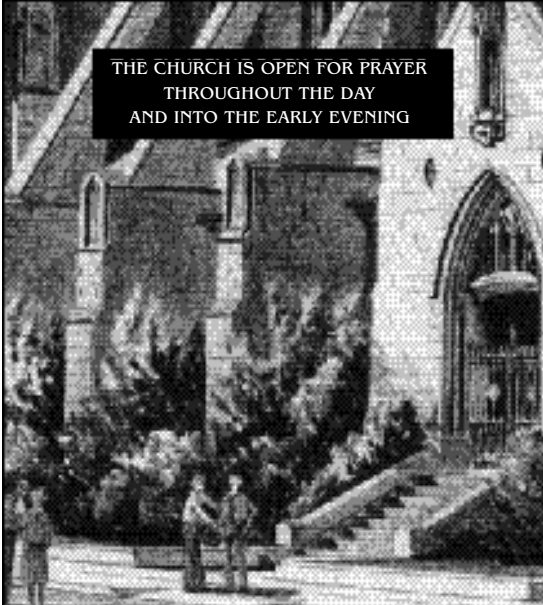


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This absolutely wonderful little guy is recovering from a recent dog mauling. He had to have reconstructive jaw surgery, but that doesn't keep him from showing everyone that he truly is a happy-go-lucky pup. He thinks he's a lap dog, which could be problematic when he grows up. By the looks of his elephantine paws...he will be a big boy! Onyx is such a love and is looking for a life-long commitment from his new person or family. Please stop in and meet this stunning fellow.



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■ CRIME WATCH

Burglary

Fillmore and Eddy Streets

August 28, 3:17 a.m.

A resident of a local senior home was awakened by a sound. He sat up and saw an unknown man in his bedroom, rifling through his possessions. As he shouted for the man to leave, another resident heard him and called the police. The intruder then alerted an accomplice who had been hiding in the bathroom of the apartment and both men fled.

Six officers arrived at the scene. The senior home's security guard gave them a description of two possible suspects who had entered the building a short time earlier, ostensibly to visit a grandmother. After calming several distraught residents, the officers located the suspects lounging in the grandmother's apartment.

Officers determined that the two men had climbed down a 12-story-high roof to reach the balcony of the victim's apartment. They also discovered what may have inspired such bravery: on the roof over the balcony was an empty bottle of tequila. A computer check revealed that one of the suspects was on parole from a prior burglary conviction. Both men were booked at Northern Station.

Battery

Fillmore Street

September 1, 8:36 p.m.

One woman approached another, asking for change for a \$50 bill. The woman complied, handing over two twenties and two fives. Shortly afterward, she went to a store to make a purchase, and a clerk informed her the \$50 bill was counterfeit.

A moment later, the suspect walked into the same store. When the woman who had been scammed confronted her, the suspect struck her in the face and dashed out of the store. The victim gave chase, pausing to call the police on her cell phone. As she did so, the suspect turned around and attacked her, damaging her cell phone. The victim then led two officers to the suspect, who was booked at the county jail. The counterfeit bill was booked as evidence with the U.S. Secret Service.

Stolen Property

Geary Boulevard and Steiner Street

September 6, 3:24 p.m.

Officers received a report that two men were walking down Geary Boulevard and attempting to break into one car after another using a set of keys. Several witnesses followed the suspects until the police arrived.

One officer detained the men as they were attempting to gain entry into yet another car.

One of the suspects offered an explanation: "We're looking for my girlfriend's car. She forgot where she parked it."

Doubting this, the officers searched both men and found numerous items of stolen property. The two were arrested and booked at Northern Station.

Vandalism

Broadway and Laguna Streets

September 8, 9:50 p.m.

When officers arrived at the scene in response to a report of an auto burglary in progress, the suspect had already fled. But a witness was able to give them a detailed description of the man.

Officers located the suspect at the intersection of Franklin and Broadway. While they were questioning him, the man spontaneously stated, "I got arrested for the same thing three weeks ago." When an officer asked him what he meant, the man elaborated: "You know, auto burglary." The officers had not told the man why he was being detained.

Burglary tools were found on the suspect. He was booked at Northern Station.

Sexual Assault

Post and Laguna Streets

September 9, 1:17 a.m.

A report of a traffic collision brought officers to McAllister and Gough Streets. The occupant of one car was bleeding profusely. She told officers she had been sexually assaulted, but had managed to fight off her attacker by spraying him with pepper spray and hitting him in the face with her shoe before he fled. She stated that she believed the man must be bleeding from his injuries.

At Laguna and Grove Streets, officers located the very bloody suspect. A witness approached the officers, claiming he had observed the entire incident. He had heard the victim crying and had approached her to investigate. The suspect had tried to flee in his car, nearly running over the witness. The witness gave chase in his own car; eventually the suspect crashed his car into the witness's vehicle in an attempt to get away. The suspect was arrested and booked at Northern Station.

Police contact numbers

Emergency: 911

Non-emergency: 553-0123

TTY: 558-2404

Tip line: 392-2623

Anonymous tip line: 885-5187

The next Community Relations Forum will be held on Monday, October 12, at Northern Station, 1125 Fillmore, at 6 p.m.

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■ SHOPPING

These boots are made for walking

Despite its hills, and sometimes because of them, this is a great city for walking. But you need the right apparatus. Fall boots that foot the bill are now popping up in neighborhood shoe stores.

NOT LIKE GRANDMA'S: "We're getting in so many boots, we'll barely have room," says a sales associate at **Crosswalk Shoes**, at 2122 Fillmore. "And we're getting more — some for comfort, some trendy, some waterproof and, because so many people have asked for them, Uggs."

Early arrivals are two low ankle boots with a Victorian flavor by New York-based Giraudon. Both have sensible one-inch heels and two-tone piecework that resembles a spat. The version in purple suede and black leather, dubbed "French Dressing," is complemented by a suede tie at the toe. And the beige and brown style called "Grandma" is way more hip than most grandmas ever wore. Both sell for \$239.

ONSHORE STYLE, OFFSHORE PRICES: Biviel, noted for bringing back the round toe and making it stick, prides itself on its comfy but elegant line of footwear. The low-heeled, high-calf, slightly-more-pointed-than-before numbers just in for fall are made offshore — that's fashionspeak for made in China — which, according to sales associates at **Gimme Shoes**, at 2358 Fillmore, explains why the "comfortable, cute boots can be offered at a good price."

The stylized topstitching on the sides is subtly reminiscent of a cowboy boot, if cowboys could subtle be. They're available in both dark chocolate brown and black for \$228.

RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD: Owner Paolo Iantorno designs all the footwear offered at **Paolo**, at 2000 Fillmore. Most styles are available in limited editions of 20 to 25 pairs, crafted in 30 small factories in his native Italy.

"Italians feel that a boot should be all leather," says a sales associate, who knows the feeling because he is Italian himself.

But some of Paolo's boots this season sport a thin rubber overface stitched onto the leather sole for comfort and durability. One such style, nearly knee high, includes a detachable brace at the heel and slouchy folds at the instep and ankle. It's \$299.

RETAIL REPORT



The vintage shop departed in 2004, but still no new tenant has arrived.

HOW LONG?

Prime space sits empty for a third year

HALLOWEEN is coming this month, but the empty store at 2028 Fillmore, next door to Harry's Bar, will sit it out again this year.

The space formerly housed Departures from the Past, a vintage shop always overrun during the weeks before Halloween. Since the store moved to a new location near Nob Hill in May 2004, its old home has remained vacant and become a prime target for graffiti and the accumulation of cigarette butts.

As the real estate firm's sign continues to hang above the papered windows into a third year, the common suspicion is greed. Locals surmise that the long vacancy is simply another case of a landlord jacking the rent so high no one will pay.

Turns out it's not so.

Pam Mendelsohn, the agent handling the property, says many businesses have

been interested in the space during the years it has been empty — one-of-a-kind shops as well as high-end designers and chain stores.

Just as the space was about to be rented, owner Truitt Sperry died. Now the property is tied up in his estate, which is still to be settled by his son and daughter.

Mendelsohn says there has been some recent progress, and that a new lease may be signed by the end of the year.

"I've got a dozen proposals from well-qualified tenants," Mendelsohn says. "I think it's going to end up being somebody good at some point."

This is one of the few retail spaces on upper Fillmore to remain available for very long. Mendelsohn says the demand for retail space on the street is strong.

"It's the most desirable in town by far," she says.

Halloween costumes are now on Hyde

While its former home on Fillmore Street remains empty, Departures from the Past has been reincarnated as a new shop, Costume Party, at 1058 Hyde Street, near California.

It is a smaller version of its former self, but is similarly stocked chockablock with vintage clothes and lingerie, tuxes, hats, boas, bustiers, crinolines and other types of attire heavy on beads and sequins.

"The stock is more costumey than it was before," says the owner, Spig, who uses only

one name. "There's still lots of vintage stuff, but more new sexy costumes and lingerie."

The new location on Hyde Street is "more attuned to holidays and celebrations, including Burning Man, Lovefest, Pride Day, Bay to Breakers — and, of course, Halloween," he says.

While happy with his new roost, Spig admits that he still misses a few things about his old Fillmore locale: "the money, the celebrities and the cute women walking past."

Toujours Turns 20 This Month

AFTER QUITTING her job as a schoolteacher and working in an upscale lingerie store in San Anselmo for four years, Beverly Weinkauff dreamed of owning her own shop. Literally.

"One night I had a dream I gave a dinner party for friends and served them lingerie from little apothecary jars," she says.

That was 20 years ago, just before she opened **Toujours**, her intimate apparel shop at 2484 Sacramento, just off Fillmore.

Finding the perfect place was a bit of a nightmare. She was the first of 30 people to see the property, but she was warned that the elderly landlady might be a hard sell. "Downplay the lingerie angle," the real estate agent coached her. "Just mention you're an ex-schoolteacher."

She got the place, and fashioned it into an elegant and intimate shop stocked with lingerie by small and local designers that's "more romantic than sexy," along with hosiery, jewelry and fragrances.

What others may see as drawbacks to the small space around the corner from Fillmore, Weinkauff embraces as plusses.

"The shop is small, but lingerie is small," she says. "And the fact that it's off the main drag gives it that special feel of being a hidden jewel people feel they can discover."

Toujours has bedazzled customers, many of whom have been shopping there since the beginning.

"We see them through their first bras, breast reductions, husband's deaths," Weinkauff says. "Friends bring friends and family members. Some clients stop by the store just to comb their hair. It's a joy to see them all come back again."

Weinkauff's sensibilities were instilled early and then heavily influenced by a visit to France years ago. "In Paris, I was impressed by the refined way the French live," she says, "and the attention they pay to detail, especially when it comes to lingerie."

Searching for a name for the store, she took a French dictionary and started with A, but became smitten by "toujours," which means forever.

"I like the meaning of forever," she says now. "Good things last a long time."



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He's Had Better Days Than Aug. 29

► FROM PAGE 1

arrested after police cruisers surrounded his vehicle in nearby Laurel Village. Popal, who has a history of psychiatric illness, faces numerous charges, including murder for killing a Fremont pedestrian earlier in the day — plus 18 charges of attempted murder and assault with a deadly weapon for injuring San Francisco residents, most of them hit while walking on Fillmore and other neighborhood streets.

Hilkert recalls the kindness of those around him at the crime scene. Two nurses who had been lunching at nearby Neecha Thai restaurant tended him and offered words of comfort. Several passersby waited with him until the ambulance arrived.

The shock had Hilkert down, but not out. When a worried neighbor asked him how he felt, he drolly replied, "I've had better days."

When an investigating officer asked him to describe the driver, Hilkert responded, "Sir, when a car is barreling at you at 40 miles per hour, you don't look inside and say, 'My, what beautiful blue eyes you have.'"

"Fortunately," Hilkert says now, "he didn't hurt my sense of humor."

A month later, Hilkert is beginning to recover from the incident. His left



"Fortunately," Richard Hilkert says of the driver who mowed him down, "he didn't hurt my sense of humor."

shoulder was badly broken, and his left arm will be confined to a sling for at least another month while he recovers from the surgery required to fix it. His left leg still bears deep gashes. And he's still enduring medical prodding and CAT scans and X-rays, and is mostly confined to his apartment on Bush Street.

He has lived for 14 years in that apartment, just across from St. Dominic's Church, where he is a member. He is surrounded by memorabilia from a cultured and eclectic life. In the hallway hangs a painting of Hilkert clad in the red regalia of a Catholic cardinal, with the stained glass windows of St. Dominic's behind him.

One of his many recent visitors was Father Xavier, the pastor at St. Dominic's.

"He gave me what they used to call Extreme Unction or The Last Rites," Hilkert said. "He blessed my head. Then he blessed my palms. And he gave me communion. As soon as he left, I got on the phone to my brother, who's a very staunch Catholic, and I said, 'For once, I'm holier than thou.'"

The apartment, always Hilkert's haven for reading and penning postcards, has become an even more important refuge now that he's housebound. The place is brimming with music and photographs and artwork — and a huge selection of books, piled and shelved all about, companions collected during his 20 years as the owner of Richard Hilkert, Bookseller, Ltd., a convivial shop located for most of that time on Hayes Street.

"I'm sure Mollie Stone's misses me. But otherwise, being laid up has not disrupted my social life," says Hilkert, who frequently welcomes neighbors and other well-wishers who deliver dinner, stop in to play dominos, bring bouquets of sunflowers, deposit the daily newspapers at his front door or offer a gift certificate to Florio, a regular watering hole.

Many of the visitors, mindful of his fondness for eating and drinking well, bring gifts of food.

"My refrigerator looks like Fibber McGee and Molly's closet," he notes. "It's almost too well stocked."

Hilkert has also found a few hopeful signs in the fallout from the trauma. "I've been amazed to learn what you can do with one hand," he says, noting that his dominant right hand is still mercifully unhampered.

And he no longer suffers the chronic backache he used to endure. "Apparently the accident shocked the pain out of my back," he says. "Oddly enough, it doesn't hurt now."

But what has meant the most to the wordsmith and inveterate correspondent are the cards and letters that have poured in — hundreds of them, collected in boxes in the living room.

One is from a woman in Lafayette who wrote to reminisce about the time she stopped by his Hayes Street bookstore and was treated to a glass of sherry and good conversation, which she remembers as "a chance encounter that remains one of the best experiences of my life."

Hilkert beams. "That is why I had the bookstore," he says. "It now gives me a feeling of modest accomplishment."

"When fate writes, you read," he says. "I now feel that if I can just get through the days allotted to me, telling stories, maybe stroking my own ego, I will continue to be blessed."

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RUTH BERNHARD AT 101

One of the most respected photographers of all time lives in the neighborhood, and did much of her most important work here. This month she turns 101.

BY MARGARETTA MITCHELL

LIKE A GREAT WINE, Ruth Bernhard is sufficiently aged to be considered vintage. With her photographs in all the major collections in this country and abroad, and her role as teacher rivaling her artistic achievements, she has arrived at that point in her life when people treat her as an icon.

For all of her 100 years, she has sustained a rare fascination with the world around her, receiving each new day with a childlike spirit of discovery. The legacy of that attitude is expressed in her photographs, which she refers to as “gifts from the unconscious.”

Many of her best-known photographs were made in her home and studio on Clay Street, near Alta Plaza Park, where she has lived since she moved to San Francisco in 1953, and where she lives still.

Ruth Bernhard was born in Berlin, Germany, on October 14, 1905. Her parents had married very young and were divorced by the time she was two years old. From her point of view, she was an orphan. She was abandoned by her mother and estranged from her self-centered and aristocratic father.

Lucian Bernhard, her father, was rapidly rising as a star in the emerging new world of German design and advertising. He was a brilliant artist, but for Ruth he was a benevolent but critical and distant figure. Among his colleagues he found two sisters who were sensitive and loving teachers. With their mother, they made a home for Ruth in Hamburg for the next six years. The only child in her adopted family, she learned early to entertain herself and to be an independent thinker.

Throughout these early years, Ruth's father was her ideal, admired and loved at a distance. As a child, Ruth knew her father's work better than she knew his face because all over Germany's walls were his beautifully designed posters. In time, Lucian Bernhard became known as the father of the German poster.

In 1913, after her father remarried, Ruth went back to Berlin to live with him and her stepmother, eventually becoming the eldest of five children in the new family. The Bernhards' home was like an art museum, filled with fine paintings, sculpture and other wonderful treasures. In the library were rows of beautiful books, many of which had been handsomely designed by her father. He was by then a famous illustrator, type designer and advertising artist.

He was also a perfectionist who demanded much of himself and others, particularly his daughter. Many years

later, when Ruth brought him her first portfolio of 12 photographs, he responded:

“I don't like this one.”

“But what of the other 11?”

“They are perfect. You are my daughter, aren't you?”

In 1927, after studies at the Academy of Art in Berlin, Ruth excitedly accepted her father's invitation to join him in New York City, where he was living and working. She arrived in the United States at age 22 brimming with a keen sense of adventure but with no idea where her young life was heading.

For the next two years her father provided her the opportunity to learn English and adjust to life in the New World. Finally, the day of reckoning arrived. One afternoon, deciding she was ready to get to work, he introduced her to the photography editor of a popular women's magazine called *The Delineator*. Her first job, at \$45 a week, placed her in the darkroom as assistant to the assistant. It was there she learned the rudiments of photography with an 8x10 view camera. The work was tedious, and Ruth began coming in later and leaving earlier each day.

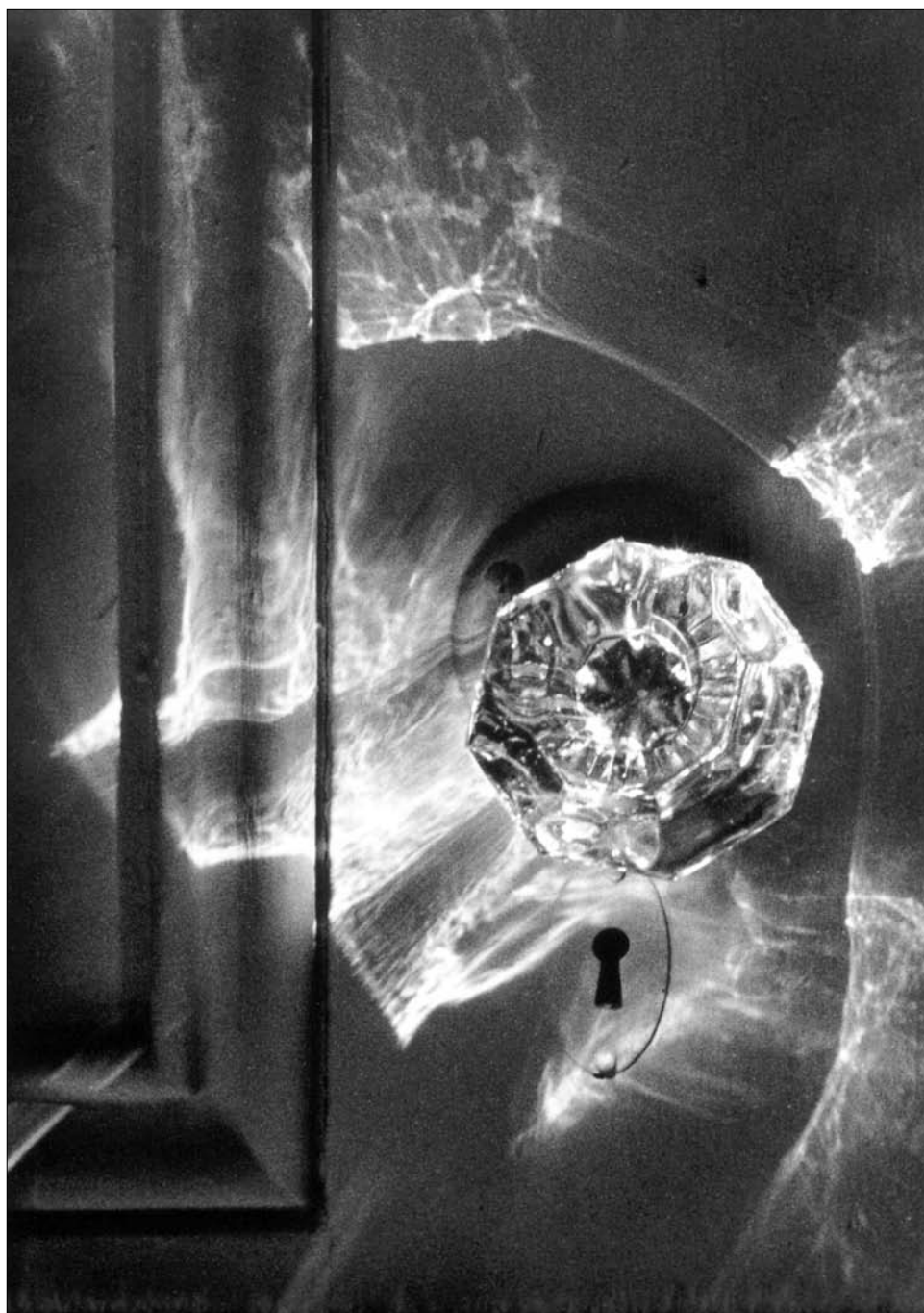
“They put up with me much longer than they should have,” she laughs. Within six months she was fired and given \$90 in severance pay. With that money, Ruth purchased a collection of photographic equipment, including an 8x10 view camera, from a friend who was in financial straits.

The fateful gesture changed the direction of her life.

It was 1929 and Bernhard — like so many others during the Great Depression — was unemployed. Despite her initial unsuccessful encounter with photography, she began doing still lifes with the new large camera. Without commercial assignments, she photographed simply for her own pleasure.

Money was scarce, and in her efforts to conserve film, Bernhard evolved her lifelong habit of working hours, or even days, to arrange the objects meticulously before her camera, thus expending only a single negative. Among these early images were photographs of lifesavers and straws, frugal purchases made from Woolworth's.

Her first group of photographs was seen by several well-known designer friends of her father who needed pictures of their work. To her surprise, they expressed great interest in her photographs, and her commercial career was born. Soon she was commissioned by industrial designers, architects, potters and sculptors.



Seeing light is a spiritual experience for me. I saw the exciting sprays of light from the glass doorknob in my apartment. Here I was with a perfect subject and the light would change before I could do a picture. The following day was overcast, and so was the next. The sun finally shone, but not on the doorknob. Determined, I decided to mark the calendar for one year from the date when I “saw” the photograph, the 11th of May. A year later I was ready and everything happened as planned. I couldn't have been happier.

Doorknob, 1973

© RUTH BERNHARD
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Eventually she began doing advertising and fashion photography.

Her first published photograph appeared in *Advertising Arts* in 1931. Titled *Lifesavers*, it was a photograph she made the year before from a nickel package of candy arranged in a lively staccato design that expressed the rhythm of New York's Fifth Avenue.

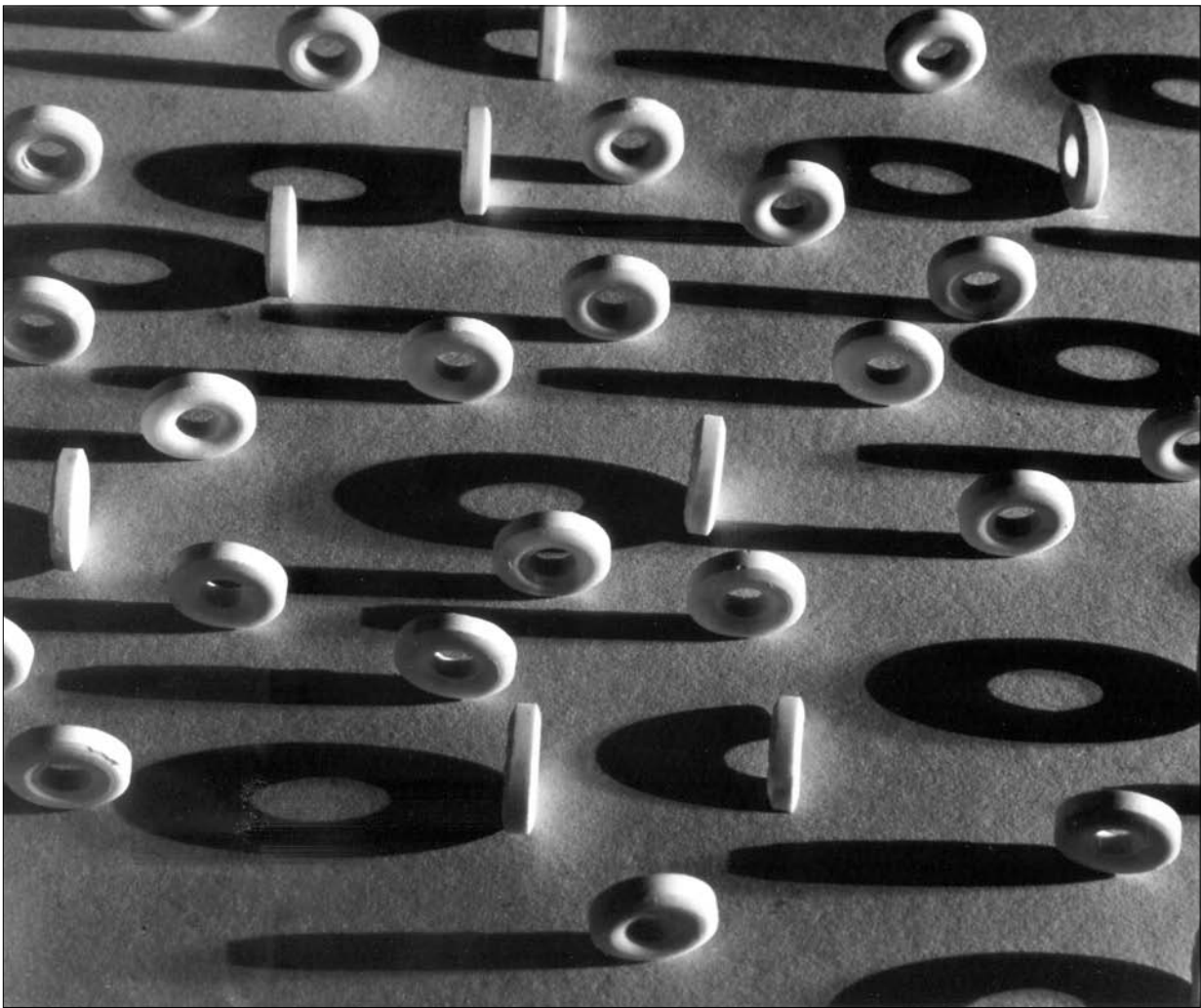
While doing commercial work, Bernhard realized that light is the essential ingredient for the making of a fine photograph. Since she preferred working at night when everything was quiet, she decided to buy a set of studio lights. She soon mastered these and often spent several evenings concentrating on a single assignment, attempting to reach the perfection of the object on which she was focused.

Jan van Ruhtenberg, who was staff designer in the art department of the newly formed Museum of Modern Art, lived in the apartment next to Bernhard's. One day he admired her work and commissioned her to photograph objects for the museum's *Machine Art* catalog, published in 1934. Among the objects brought to her studio was a restaurant-size stainless steel bowl. One day, a dancer friend was visiting and Bernhard invited her to pose. She complied by curling up in the shiny, cold, curved interior of the bowl. Bernhard thus made her first exposures of the nude. One was eventually named *Embryo*. It later became the first of Ruth Bernhard's nudes to be published, and her first print sold to a private art collector.

Photography Becomes Art

WALKING ON THE BEACH in Santa Monica, while visiting Los Angeles in 1935, Bernhard experienced a dramatic turning point in her life. She was introduced to the great photographer Edward Weston, who invited her to visit his studio. The meeting had a profound effect on Bernhard. From Weston's images, she realized for the first time that photography could be art.

It was overwhelming. It was lightning in the darkness. I burst into tears. My vision was completely transformed. I had not respected photography until I met him. I stopped photographing for a year, except for my commercial work, which supported me. But I knew then that photography would be my language.



PHOTOGRAPHS © RUTH BERNHARD / ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

LEFT: *Lifesavers*, 1930, her first published photograph

ABOVE: *Creation*, 1936, the first photograph she made after meeting Edward Weston — a meeting that changed her life

RIGHT: *Perspective II*, 1967

When she returned to New York, she wrote to Weston — beginning what was to become a lifetime correspondence — and received his treasured reply:

*Bernhard —
You have excellent eyes. Mine can't harm you. I am glad they were stimulating. And you were too — to me. One day we will meet again. In New York?
Cariñosamente
Weston*

When Bernhard returned to her personal work, she discovered a great change in her approach. “After that fateful experience I began to use my camera in a new way,” she says. “Guided entirely by intuition, not by words or intellectual concepts, I let the image form itself in my imagination.”

In 1936, Bernhard set out for Southern California hoping to study with Weston, arriving only to find that he had moved to Carmel. She set up a commercial studio in a wooded neighborhood near the Hollywood Bowl. Across the entire front of her narrow building she mounted a bold black and white sign announcing: “Ruth Bernhard, Photographer.”

That same year Bernhard was offered her first solo gallery exhibition. A second exhibition soon after at the

Pacific Institute of Music and Art drew an enthusiastic response from a *Los Angeles Times* critic, who wrote: “Bernhard’s exhibition marks the arrival of a first-rate artist who photographs.”

In the autumn of 1945, after working on a farm in New Jersey during part of the war, Bernhard returned to New York to reestablish her photographic career. At the urging of a friend, she was persuaded to show her portfolio to photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz. A champion of photography as fine art, Stieglitz was known to be an outspoken and uncompromising critic. Bernhard brought her prints to him with great trepidation. To her happy surprise Stieglitz not only liked what he saw, but offered to recommend her for a Guggenheim Fellowship. He also introduced her to his wife, the painter Georgia O’Keeffe, and remarked, referring to Bernhard’s photographs of bones and skulls, “You two have a lot in common.”

In 1947 Bernhard attended the Edward Weston retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Their friendship had been kept alive through letters, but this was their first meeting in seven years. Bernhard had already decided to return to Southern California and, once reestablished in Hollywood, she visited Weston in Carmel as much as possible.

By this time, Weston had been acclaimed as one of the

greatest American photographers of his generation, but afflicted by Parkinson’s disease, he was near the end of his working life. He lived for 10 more years, and it is from her visits during this period that Bernhard claims some of her most memorable experiences.

North to San Francisco

THE HOLLYWOOD to which Bernhard returned after the war had changed greatly. She decided to move north. In 1953, she arrived in San Francisco with her lively trio of dachshunds. She found a Victorian flat on Clay Street, not far from Fillmore.

There was lovely southern light in the living room. The walls were an impossible bright turquoise, but soon I had painted them white. I wanted to create a spare, airy space like a gallery for my photographs.

The owner, who lived downstairs, was a silversmith who had his studio in the back. I kept saying to him, “Gee, I want this place so badly for my own studio.” We laughed about that for years. One day he said, “You’ve got your studio,” and he moved his to Clement Street, a few blocks away. That wonderful space behind the house became my own.

‘Button-Pushers’ Form a Community

I KNEW NO ONE in the photo community when I arrived in San Francisco in the early 1950s, but I was invited to one and then another of Ansel Adams’s many cocktail parties. It was through those parties that I got acquainted with the community.

There were so many interesting photographers in San Francisco at that time! Several of them developed a group called the San Francisco Photographers’ Roundtable. There was Jerry Stoll, who really was the star of the group, and his wife, Gini Stoll Harding, who became a lifelong friend. Other photographers in the group were Phiz Mozzeson, Jackie Paul, Miriam Young, Paul Hassle and Pirkle Jones and his wife, Ruth Marion Baruch. They met in the Stoll studio to share their work and got the idea to have an exhibition on a theme, suggested by Dorothea Lange. It was decided that photographers had to use new pictures all taken for an event that was called “San Francisco Weekend.” They sent out a call to photographers all over the city. I heard about it and went over to the studio on Potrero Hill and introduced myself to Jerry and Gini.

Now, I never go out with my camera and wonder what I am going to photograph. I never do that, ever. But when Dorothea Lange said we had to, I did. I took myself and my camera to Chinatown. That walk resulted in three photographs [including] Mr. Reilley.

After attending a sermon by the renowned black theologian Howard Thurman at the Fellowship Church, I noticed a black man and a white girl about 9 or 10 years old standing together holding hands — she with an expression of complete trust. Responding intuitively, I made the image. When I approached the two offering to give them a print, Mr. Reilley introduced himself and his young friend. They were expecting her mother to join them for lunch.

These photographs hung in the San Francisco Arts Festival in 1955. There were about 10 of us in the show. Dorothea was the advisor and Imogen Cunningham, Nat Farbman, who was the senior editor of *Life* magazine, and I were the jury.

Everyone pitched in and worked for the exhibition, which won top honors at the festival. Gini and Jerry were so proud because we photographers were considered only “button-pushers” in those days.

Our group continued to meet and share our work. We met at a picturesque restaurant called Tommy’s Joynt at the corner of Geary and Van Ness. It was exciting to think that it took me only three years to become involved in the photography community in San Francisco. I loved it.

— RUTH BERNHARD



Mr. Reilley, 1956



Within a few years she had become a part of the social and cultural fabric of the city.

“For me,” she says, “San Francisco is an ideal city, intellectually stimulating and naturally beautiful. The ocean and forests are close enough to refresh the spirit. The architecture is always exciting.”

In San Francisco, Bernhard found herself in a wider photographic circle. When Ansel Adams saw Bernhard’s photographs published in the same magazines that featured his own, he began inviting her to his many social gatherings. It was there she met and eventually formed friendships with many of her future colleagues, among them Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange and Minor White. She also found congenial friends in Ansel and Virginia Adams and continued to be a frequent visitor to their home after they moved to Carmel.

I did a lot of dog portraits because of a pet shop on Fillmore Street. The first time I went into the shop, I saw that the owner had a dog portrait on the wall. The portrait was so poorly done I couldn’t help telling her so. “Oh,” she said, “I wish I knew someone who could photograph dogs.” I said, “You know somebody,” and I raised my hand. From then on, she sent me many elite dog owners for whom I made portraits of their delightful canines.

In my commercial portrait work over the years I have preferred animals to people for the simple reason that they never complain about their age or their wrinkles. They accept themselves as they are and respond unquestioningly to love.

In 1961 Bernhard began teaching privately, holding classes in the studio behind her house on Clay Street. Along with workshops called “Photographing the Nude” and “The Art of Feeling,” she also offered print evaluation sessions for both amateur and professional photographers. Her commercial assignments continued through the end of the decade, but she gradually wound these down as the demand for her teaching escalated. She became one of the most respected and acclaimed instructors in the photographic medium, giving lectures and master classes throughout the United States, Europe and Japan.

I do not consider myself a teacher. I look upon myself as a gardener cultivating the fertile soil, encouraging students to intensified awareness of their potential creativity. The emphasis is on feeling, self-expression and growth. The exchange between the young photographers and myself I find extremely nourishing. Many of my students have become close personal friends with whom I spend time discussing life, art and photography. It is replenishing for my spirit.

Although she had photographed the nude as early as 1934, a major body of her work was created during her intensive period of teaching in the 1950s and 1960s. For her, as for generations of artists before her, the nude has been the greatest challenge.

Through her study of the nude, Bernhard became able to teach others how to use light to create sculptural

form. Students participated in her meticulous attention to the act of seeing. She carefully instructed in light and lighting, exploring not only the usual luminescence on the figure, but also the infinite possibilities and subtleties of lighting that cause the figure to bask in its own luminosity. Philosophically, Bernhard experiences light as the power of life itself — the very vehicle of vision.

The first nudes of her San Francisco period were photographed in her living room facing Clay Street to the south. She taught there at first, but soon it was necessary to find a larger area to accommodate her following.

When the building behind her house finally became available, she set about making a separate studio for

Recipe for a long and happy life

1. Never get used to anything
2. Hold on to the child in you
3. Keep your curiosity alive
4. Trust your intuition
5. Delight in simple things
6. Say 'yes' to life with passion
7. Fall madly in love with the world
8. Remember: Today is the Day!

Ruth Bernhard

October 14, 1995

photography. There she built a platform and upholstered it with foam so her models would be comfortable for long poses. She then made a concave shape for a background based on a movie studio she had seen. With two sheets sewn together, fastened taut to the semicircular frame and sprayed “Zone-V gray” — the tone Ansel Adams made famous — she had a small but satisfactory studio. The final touch was the placement of foil on the ceiling to bounce the light as an approximation of daylight.

Becoming an Icon

ALTHOUGH SHE STOPPED taking photographs in 1976, her work became ever more widely appreciated during the 1980s and 1990s and was included in many exhibitions and publications. Portfolios were completed and quickly collected. Prices for her photographs escalated.

My greatest regret is that I no longer photograph. But I see life around me as a photographer and am affected by it all the time. I am fortunate to be able to still look forward with excitement to every day.

The intense pleasure of seeing is now something I try to give others. I see death as a part of life and feel grateful to still be able to stay independent and to enjoy each day. The language of light and shadow that we call photography brings me closer to understanding this ageless mystery called life.

It has happened many times. A visitor arrives at her home on Clay Street. Greetings are exchanged. The hallway to the living room is lined with shelves that support her treasures — nature’s tiniest shells and bones, grasses and flowers, small ceramic or wood sculptures of animals — all extensions of her own vision, and perfect conversation starters. One is picked up and shown to the visitor with great ritual dignity, and a long discussion follows that will stay with the visitor and be retold later as a magical moment meant just for him or her.

It is another lesson in seeing and awareness, effortlessly received and naturally given — lessons from a life constantly energized by imagination.

Ruth’s family has continued to grow. People bring their work for her advice. Former students fly in to visit. They call frequently, keeping in close touch. She receives letters from admirers. All these guardian spirits from around the world wishing Ruth well may be one reason she has lived so long. Her life has continued to expand, including more and more people and more and more love.

She continued to teach until she was well into her 90s. Last year, when she turned 100, she was widely hailed as one of the greatest photographers of all time, and perhaps “the greatest photographer of the nude,” as Ansel Adams said.

As Ruth Bernhard approaches her 101st birthday on October 14, she is just where she wants to be: still at home in her narrow Victorian flat on Clay Street at the top of a straight, steep stairway, with constant care and companionship. In a front room flooded with light from the south windows, she meets with friends and colleagues. A wiry woman with short curly hair and a contagious laugh, she has always appeared far younger than her years. She has slowed in recent months, but her spirit remains strong. She has not lost her ability to inspire.

A perennial, childlike curiosity about the visible and invisible worlds has become the hallmark of her work in photography and has formed the unique stamp of her holistic, affirmative philosophy of life.

When asked on a recent birthday how she would like to be remembered, she said simply, “There was a woman who loved life to the very last day.”

Margaretta Mitchell, a noted photographer based in Berkeley, is Ruth Bernhard’s biographer. This article is excerpted from her books, The Eternal Body, a collection of Ruth Bernhard’s nudes, and Ruth Bernhard: Between Art & Life, both published by Chronicle Books.

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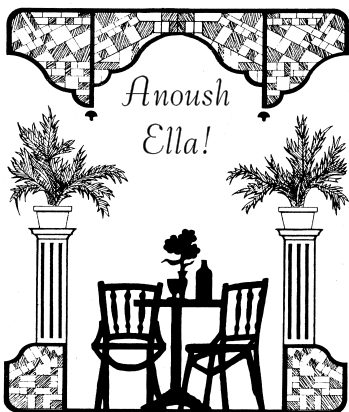


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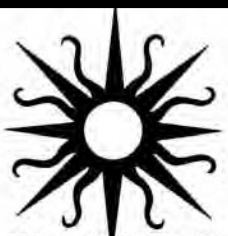
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Three Men and a Restaurant Called Bushi-Tei in Japantown

By SOPHIA CARMELLA

JAPANESE simplicity, French sophistication and California's penchant for the fresh and new all come together in the food and the look of the restaurant Bushi-Tei in Japantown.

Open less than a year, the ambitious spot is already enjoying acclaim, including a Best of the Bay award and a growing clientele. Undoubtedly, the enduring fascination with fusion cuisine creates a favorable climate for Bushi-Tei.

But its underlying strength is the association formed among its three principals: an accomplished businessman, a world-class chef and a hospitality veteran with expertise in public relations.

Takumi Watsuba and Seiji Wakabayashi, known as Tak and Waka, became acquainted in the 1990s. Waka's culinary talents caught Tak's attention when he was a regular customer at Ondine restaurant in Sausalito, where the chef made his mark by serving up such signatures dishes as lobster salad with chrysanthemum leaves, ginger cream, smoked bacon, papaya and curry oil.

A few years later, when Tak decided to convert his office space in Japantown into a restaurant, he recalled Waka's cooking and determined to track him down.

By then, opportunity had lured Waka to Dallas, Texas, where he opened two restaurants. Tak approached Waka with an invitation to return to California.

As their partnership unfolded, Marc Sittenfield heard about the venture and wrote to express his interest in being involved. Sittenfield, a native of France, cut his teeth in the restaurant business as a teen working at various restaurants on the French Riviera alongside his father, a former general manager of Le Meridien Hotels. Sittenfield

began his courtship with California dining during the late 1980s with stints at Los Angeles hot spots Spago and L'Orangerie. In the mid-90s, he moved to San Francisco and worked at Hawthorne Lane.

The 40-seat restaurant's sleek interior is outfitted with ancient wood that contrasts with its ultra modern fixtures, capturing the central theme of Bushi-Tei, which is "past meets future." The rough-hewn wooden planks that line the walls and form an open canopy were quarantined and shipped piece by piece from Japan to California. A huge communal table is angled across the dining room.

The overall design of the restaurant was rendered in Japan and reconstructed in the United States. No design detail escaped the founders' attention, from the customized placeholder for chopsticks and silverware to the automated Toto toilets.

The restaurant's ambitions are revealed in Bushi-Tei's name, which translates as "Samurai with a big heart." Tak describes the restaurant's menu as "French California fusion with a touch of a Japanese accent."

Waka has revived his lobster salad with chrysanthemum leaves and added new creations diners have already singled out as favorites — including appetizers of seared foie gras with pumpkin pot de crème and Big Eye tuna with wasabe crème fraiche and a main course of Kobe beef marinated in miso. He makes everything, including the breads and crackers.

The restaurant boasts a large wine list and offerings of unique sake. In addition to the regular menu, Bushi-Tei offers a five-course tasting menu, or omakasa, which changes daily, and a three-course seasonal menu with wine pairings.

Bushi-Tei is at 1638 Post Street. Reservations can be made by calling 440-4959 or visiting www.bushi-tei.com.

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I smiled and waved. I know that wasn't necessary but I couldn't resist.

Why are we in such a hurry to get nowhere? I look back at moments I wish I had relished and realize they are gone forever. All I can do is now is slow down and savor every moment that's left.



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■ AT THE MARKET



It's apple season

The first Golden Delicious, Gala and Jonathan apples of the season have arrived from Rainbow Orchards, a small farm outside Placerville. They're available at the Fillmore Farmers Market on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Fillmore and O'Farrell.

Cafe Majestic Is Serving Once Again

Cafe Majestic has reopened in the Hotel Majestic at 1500 Sutter Street.

Chef Shawn Paul, formerly at Soluna, near City Hall, is the new chef. The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar remains open until 1 a.m.

The menu features classic American dishes, including New York steaks, braised short ribs and pan-roasted chicken with goat cheese polenta. Appetizers range in

price from \$8 to \$10, main courses from \$20 to \$25. Breads and desserts, including ice creams, are house made. The wine list is purely local, with most entries coming from Napa Valley or Sonoma County.

A fresh coat of ivory paint and new banquettes brighten the 75-seat room. The restaurant's collection of Majestic butterflies has been remounted and remains on display.

Coming to You From Joanne Weir's Kitchen on Pine Street

PUBLIC TELEVISION's newest cooking show is a local affair.

"Joanne Weir's Cooking Class" is the latest from award-winning teacher and author Joanne Weir, who has lived in the neighborhood for many years.

The show originates in her stage-set home kitchen on Pine Street.

"It's the shortest commute I've ever had — from my bedroom to the kitchen," says Weir. "Thirty people descended on my house to work for a month. They removed every stick of furniture except in my bedroom."

The show will be broadcast nationwide for 26 weekly episodes, continuing into next year. Locally it can be seen on KQED on Saturdays at noon.

The focus is on Mediterranean recipes that use fresh and seasonal ingredients.

The idea for the new show was to give viewers a sense of private cooking lessons in a home kitchen. In this series, Weir is joined by students working side-by-side in her own kitchen.

Her students are an eclectic mix. There is Ron the firefighter, Emily the media consultant, Jeff the general contractor and Nicolas the opera singer. She even brings in her brother John, an architect.

As they cook, the students reveal family traditions from many different backgrounds and anecdotes from their own cooking successes — and disasters.

Each episode features Weir showing a student — and viewers — what can go wrong during cooking disasters, such as overbeaten eggwhites, and how to make



"It's the shortest commute I've ever had — from my bedroom to the kitchen," says Joanne Weir (center) of her new television show.

them right, even if a neophyte is at the whisk. At the end of each lesson, Weir and her students sample their creations and discuss lessons learned. Wine expert Eugenio Jardim offers suggestions for food and wine pairings.

Joanne Weir has become a staple of public television, thanks to her role as host of

two previous public television series, "Weir Cooking in the City" and "Weir Cooking in the Wine Country." Before she became a cooking teacher, she was a chef at the legendary Chez Panisse in Berkeley.

In addition to her television work, Weir has a year-round teaching schedule that takes her all over the globe. As her new

show made its debut this fall, she was off to Italy for three weeks of classes, followed by a week of classes and tours in Provence.

This month she returns to the neighborhood and begins a new series of classes in San Francisco at the Four Seasons Hotel. Details are available at www.joanneweir.com.

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By Friday, October 6, 2006



NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

| HOUSES | BR | BA | Sq Ft | Price |
|-------------|----|-----|-------|-------------|
| 3035 Pierce | 5 | 3.5 | | \$3,317,000 |
| 2659 Green | 5 | 4.5 | 5920 | \$5,300,000 |

| CONDOS | BR | BA | Sq Ft | Price |
|----------------------|----|------|-------|-------------|
| 3653 Buchanan #A | 0 | 1 | 387 | \$295,000 |
| 2415 Van Ness #302 | 0 | 1 | | \$387,000 |
| 2999 California #605 | 0 | 1 | 615 | \$420,000 |
| 2595 Clay #3 | 0 | 1 | 475 | \$450,000 |
| 3241 Gough #4 | 1 | 1 | 750 | \$630,000 |
| 1945 Washington #506 | 2 | 2 | 975 | \$682,000 |
| 2200 Sacramento #504 | 1 | 1.5 | | \$720,000 |
| 1769 Broadway #11 | 1 | 1 | 925 | \$740,000 |
| 2760 Sacramento #11 | 1 | 1 | 1220 | \$749,000 |
| 2425-A Franklin | 2 | 1 | | \$799,000 |
| 1998 Pacific #204 | 2 | 2 | 1105 | \$831,000 |
| 1870 Jackson #201 | 2 | 2 | 1270 | \$835,000 |
| 2875 Jackson #4 | 1 | 1 | 1208 | \$849,000 |
| 1970 Sacramento #302 | 2 | 1 | 1382 | \$855,000 |
| 2760 Sacramento #9 | 1 | 1 | 1220 | \$859,000 |
| 2142 Franklin | 2 | 2 | 1202 | \$895,000 |
| 2090 Pacific #505 | 1 | 1 | | \$899,000 |
| 2320 Divisadero | 2 | 1.5 | | \$1,180,000 |
| 3417 Divisadero | 2 | 1.25 | | \$1,195,000 |
| 3653 Buchanan #2 | 2 | 2 | 1506 | \$1,300,000 |
| 2326 Pacific | 2 | 2 | 1211 | \$1,300,000 |
| 1959 California | 3 | 2 | | \$1,350,000 |
| 3653 Buchanan #1 | 2 | 2 | 1543 | \$1,390,000 |
| 2719 Union | 2 | 2 | | \$1,525,000 |
| 3614 Webster | 2 | 2.5 | | \$1,595,000 |
| 2298 Pacific #4 | 5 | 4.5 | | \$2,495,000 |

Condominium sales remain the most active part of the market, and during the last month the condo market in the neighborhood really took off. Home sales, on the other hand, were down significantly from previous months.

This monthly survey includes Pacific Heights, lower Pacific Heights and Cow Hollow. Historically, prices varied widely in these neighborhoods. Now prices have become significantly more uniform throughout the area, and the prices of condominiums in lower Pacific Heights, south of California Street, often rival those north of California Street in Pacific Heights. The typical price of a condominium is approaching \$1 million.

— KEN BOERI

■ GARDEN NOTES

Nurturing the soil and the soul

There's an iron and wooden bench outside our house on Pine Street, in the heart of the Fillmore, where neighbors and passersby often pause.

People have lunch, take a coffee break, view the rose garden, fix bicycle tires or just plop down their grocery bags before continuing on their journey. Most Sunday mornings a young man sits on the bench and blows bubbles with his daughter.

These passersby are one of the joys of gardening on Pine Street, one of the busiest thoroughfares in the city.

Behind the bench there's an iron fence dating to 1892, and beside it an oval carriage step from the days when Pine Street was a dirt road bustling with horse-drawn carriages. Although the fence has been there for 114 years, it's like any other fence because people talk over it, passing the time of day with their philosophies of life or a simple greeting.

Often people stop because they are attracted to our garden. Over the years many kind people have written notes to my husband and me, and sometimes left photographs and plants. Last year our holidays were brightened when a mysterious and still anonymous person tied candy canes to the fence. It lights up our day when someone strolling by remarks, "I walk by your garden every day. Is it time to prune the roses yet?"

Exchanging gardening tips and ideas about life helps the hectic and sometimes anonymous city become personal. Both regulars and newcomers alike make a connection, and the city beat goes on, one conversation at a time.

— SUSAN MEYERS

12 NEW FILLMORE October 2006

Open House Turns Into a Block Party

JEAN HURLEY was having lunch in mid-September with a good friend, who mentioned that she and her husband had just completed the renovation project they had undertaken a couple of years ago.

Hurley's interest was piqued.

She hadn't started looking, but she was feeling she needed more space than she had in her condo in the Amelia complex at Fillmore and Bush. So she called another friend who's a real estate agent and asked for a preview of the cottage her friends had renovated on Webster Street, near California.

"I walked in," Hurley says, "and I thought, 'Gosh, this is nice — really nice.'"

It was all a little like an exciting first date, so she decided she'd better sleep on it. But it was love. She came back the next day and made an offer, and broke the news to her friends that night over dinner.

When the first Sunday open house began the next afternoon, the cottage had already found its new owner.

What had been scheduled as an open house turned into something of a block party as various neighbors trooped in to see what had become of the little house near the end of the block.



Hurley stopped by the open house briefly with a tape measure to see what might go where. When she got there, she met some of the neighbors who had come by. Soon two more couples who lived nearby arrived.

"It was quite remarkable," she says. "The friendliness of the neighbors and

their closeness really struck me."

As she was standing on the deck, checking out her new garden, she was introduced to the son of the woman who had lived in the cottage for decades. He had returned to see what had become of his family home.

In fact, the 1875 cottage has been

The locals came to see the renovated cottage on Webster Street — and found they already had a new neighbor.

completely rebuilt. Neighbors resisted an initial plan to tear it down and build a new three-story house in its place. A compromise was struck that stripped the orange stucco from the cottage and raised it slightly so that a garage and two additional bedrooms and bathrooms could be added downstairs.

Upstairs is a living room and another bedroom and bath, plus an open and airy combination kitchen, dining room and family room flooded with western light that all look out onto the deck and garden. Only the original outside walls remain.

"I love Fillmore Street," Hurley says. "I love the diversity of the neighborhood. I have friends nearby. It never occurred to me that I could find new construction with lots of space and light in the neighborhood" — especially, she says, since she is "more of a contemporary gal than a Victorian gal."

She got both: totally new construction behind a Victorian facade. She even liked the color scheme.

And the neighbors, too.

"I sort of feel like I've been adopted into a big new family," Hurley says. "That's one of the reasons I love this neighborhood. It's like living in a little village."



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The end is (almost) here

Our 1881 Victorian at 2032 Scott Street has been under renovation to replace the exterior gingerbread detail for six months now. It has been six months of wonder, six months of surprises, six months of cost overruns and three months more than predicted — including one especially unexpected week at a motel when the house was unlivable.

Was it worth it? Looking at the gold-leaf sunbursts, the grand balustrades escalating up the stairway, the “widow’s walk” balcony above the portico — and the rich paint mixture of a “rocky ridge” taupe color contrasted with buttercream trim — my partner Sean Dowdall and I would say yes.

It’s a great feeling to pay tribute to a historical home whose bones are still as beautiful as they were 100 years ago. The most thrilling part has been when our neighbors stop by to watch the progress and let us know this renovation has rewards for everyone in the neighborhood.

— DAVID LANDIS



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An L.A. Week, a Fillmore Weekend

AS THE FALL television season gets under way in earnest this month, one show can claim a connection to the neighborhood.

“What About Brian” — an ensemble drama set in Los Angeles that is pitched as a modern-day “thirtysomething” meets “Sex and the City” — premieres Monday, October 9, at 10 p.m.

And its director and executive producer, Jonathan Pontell, is a local — at least some of the time.

Pontell and his wife Lisa have a long-running love affair with the neighborhood. Since 2002, when they bought a home on Broadway, they’ve made it their refuge from Hollywood.

“We love it here,” says Pontell — so much so that they make the long drive from Los Angeles every other weekend to soak up the local ambiance.

“When we walk into our place and see that view of the bay, it’s like heaven — out of L.A., out of the industry, out of our cars,” he says. “We love walking up and down Fillmore Street.”

The Pontells are native New Yorkers who came to Hollywood in 1981. He had already worked in television and movies, as a film editor on “The Exorcist” and on documentaries for public television and CBS News.

In Los Angeles he edited episodes of “Hill Street Blues” and “L.A. Law” and began a continuing association with the producer David E. Kelley, whose shows have been among the most successful on television.

Pontell was a producer and director of “The Practice” and “Ally McBeal,” garnering four Emmy Awards, two Golden Globes and a George Foster Peabody Award.



Director Jonathan Pontell, right, with actor David Boreanaz on the set of “Bones.”

The Pontells started coming north to visit a daughter in Berkeley.

“Coming from New York, we found we couldn’t survive in L.A.,” Pontell says. “San Francisco has a big city vibe — sophisticated like New York, and the geography is just so wonderful.”

At first they stayed in hotels. The El Drisco in Pacific Heights became a favorite, and they found they liked the neighborhood. When a friendly real estate agent found the perfect home for them a few years ago, they bought it.

Pontell almost managed to combine his entertainment career and his fondness for San Francisco last year when he shot a pilot here for an hour-long weekly drama called

“Halley’s Comet,” which followed a first-year medical student and her friends. It was a visual valentine to San Francisco, but it didn’t get picked up by the WB network.

Pontell quickly bounced back and became a director of “Bones,” one of last season’s surprise hits, before being handed the reins of his own show for this season.

“What About Brian” airs Mondays at 10 p.m. on ABC. With a little luck, it will keep the Pontells in Los Angeles in their home in Nichols Canyon for a few more work weeks.

But not forever. “We love it up here,” Pontell says, “and as soon as we stop working, this is where we’ll be.”

GOOD WORKS

Calvary connects volunteers, needs

Calvary Presbyterian Church has initiated “Calvary Connects,” a new program to expand the number of members involved in volunteering for community service.

During September, more than 250 people signed up to perform a few hours of community service at 16 different agencies between September 16 and October 11.

Volunteers are taking on a wide variety of activities, including:

- cooking and serving a meal for the families of seriously ill children at the Ronald McDonald House
- gardening for a morning in the AIDS Memorial Grove at Golden Gate Park
- stocking shelves and sorting food donations one evening at the San Francisco Food Bank
- decorating cards for food trays for patients at California Pacific Medical Center.

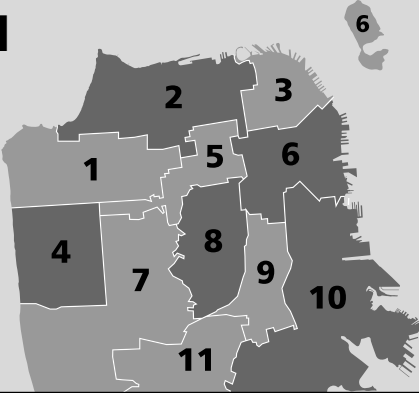
“This is the first time the church has brought together this variety of volunteer opportunities all at one time,” said Mary Rhoads, who chairs the group organizing the volunteers. “It has been really inspiring to see whole families sign up to work together at the Food Bank or at one of the parks, or to see people who have never volunteered before join with others to fix a meal at Ronald McDonald House.”

Many of the church’s members already volunteer year-round at various agencies in the community. “Calvary Connects” is a special effort to recruit more volunteers.

Get Informed About Ranked-Choice Voting!

For the November 7, 2006 Election, San Francisco voters will use ranked-choice voting to elect the Assessor-Recorder and Public Defender.

San Francisco voters who live in Supervisorial Districts 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 will also use ranked-choice voting to elect their Member of the Board of Supervisors.



With ranked-choice voting, the names of all the candidates are listed in three side-by-side columns on the ballot.

This allows you to rank up to three candidates for the same office.

If there are fewer than three candidates, or to rank fewer than three candidates, you may leave any remaining columns blank.

Learn More About Ranked-Choice Voting!

For more information on ranked-choice voting, or to find out what district you live in, contact the San Francisco Department of Elections at (415) 554-4375 or visit www.sfgov.org/election.

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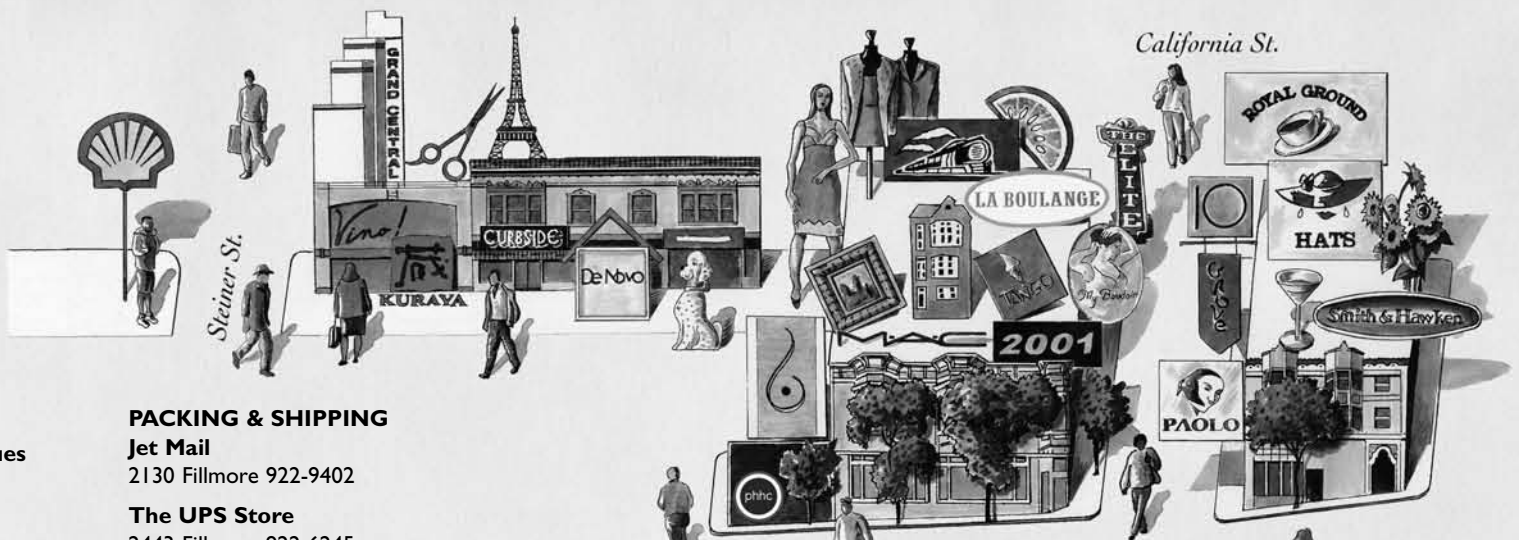
Para información acerca de la votación por orden de preferencia, llame al Departamento de Elecciones al (415) 554-4366.

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