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New **FILLMORE**

SAN FRANCISCO ■ FEBRUARY 2008



Portrait of Minnie Baker, 1973, by Nicola Lane

The Can-Do Still Does

By NICOLA LANE

LONDON — I am an artist and filmmaker living in London. It was with great joy that I discovered the story in the July 2007 issue of the *New Fillmore* when I was searching the web — as I do from time to time — for Minnie Baker and the

Can-Do Club on Fillmore Street.

I am so happy to find Minnie again. It is no surprise that instead of taking it easy at 74, Minnie is sailing around the world. In the merchant marine!

I have never stopped thinking about her and her power to heal and take care of people. That's what she did for me.

STORY, Page 15

Ralph Lauren Goes Country on Fillmore

But it's a 'formula retail' business, so chain store law requires a permit

By DON LANGLEY

WHAT WAS announced last summer as a Ralph Lauren Rugby store at 2040 Fillmore Street, with a projected opening date of September 2007, will now be a Ralph Lauren Country store with a target opening date of the end of August 2008.

The location was formerly the home of Smith & Hawken.

"Polo has desired a presence on Fillmore Street for some time," said project manager Bill Oster. He described Ralph Lauren Country as a new brand, mostly fashion-oriented, and said the store, if approved, would have a traditional look with extensive woodwork, including pine floors and "lots of mahogany."

Ralph Lauren last year opened a Rugby store featuring a line it describes as "eclectic prep" nearby at 2071 Union Street.

Because Ralph Lauren falls under the city's formula retail ordinance regulating chain stores — which includes businesses with more than 11 stores offering standardized merchandise — the company must obtain a conditional use permit from the Planning Commission.

A hearing scheduled for January 31 was delayed until February 14 after the Pacific Heights Residents Association raised objections. Ralph Lauren's representatives will meet with the group on February 4 to discuss their plans for the site.

Paul Wermer, a director of the residents association, said he has "real concerns of Fillmore becoming an upscale mall with only chains coming in, leaving no opportunity for small local shops and neighborhood serving businesses."

Fillmore already has many chain stores that were operating before the formula retail ordinance was enacted last year.

Oster said he was surprised a public hearing was required before opening the store. "It's unusual to have to go for conditional use in a neighborhood already zoned for retail," he said.

Merchants have complained that Ralph Lauren has "left an empty hole in the heart of our neighborhood for six months," as one letter said, that will continue to remain empty for much of this year.

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LETTERS



A floral wreath was left by a tree near Pine and California Streets after a pedestrian was killed at the intersection.

Remembering a Life Lost Too Soon

TO THE EDITORS:

I am sending this e-mail to request a picture in your November 2007 edition. It was published with the article regarding the pedestrian death of Ali Shepherd on Pine Street and the wreath that was placed at Pine and Fillmore.

I am the brother of Ali Shepherd and I am the one who placed that wreath there on Saturday, October 20, the day after her funeral service in San Rafael.

It would mean a great deal to have that picture. The wreath was my way of getting to say goodbye to her at the last place she was alive on earth.

I only wish you could have known my sister and the impact she

had on the lives she touched. Her accomplishments were not only in her professional life, but also in the relationships she shared with family and many, many friends. Ali lived life in the moment, never missing an opportunity to include others. She and her husband Jim loved to visit the Fillmore with friends to share all the neighborhood had to offer, and still does.

I will be back to Fillmore every time I visit the city because her spirit is alive on that corner. I also promised the management at the Elite Cafe I would share a drink with them to toast Ali at what was her destination that fateful evening.

DAVID W. DUFFY
LAS VEGAS

Here's to a Great Neighborhood

TO THE EDITORS:

I have been meaning to write you for some time now. My husband and I love your newspaper. We look forward to it every month. Sometimes we even pick up two copies so we can each read through it at the same time.

For some context, I never read newspapers—I get my news elsewhere. However, when I receive your paper I read every word, even the ads. I have learned so much about our neighborhood from reading your articles.

During the Cherry Blossom Festival, my husband and I attended the special events inside the Miyako

Hotel. I would not have known about these events had I not read about them in your paper. We also went to see the play, *After the War*, based on your article.

Recently, we volunteered at the Alta Plaza Park volunteer day. We saw the posting for the event in your paper and had a wonderful time. It was great being able to contribute back to the neighborhood that we love. My husband and I look forward to making this a monthly volunteer activity.

I can't thank you enough for the *New Fillmore*. Keep up the great work!

JENNIFER CAMPBELL

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Every month, 20,000 copies are delivered to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and we welcome your suggestions and story ideas.

Archive of recent issues: www.NewFillmore.com

Your comments and letters about the neighborhood are welcome there, too.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Fillmore Center Revamping Its Plaza

DEMOLITION of the windswept concrete plaza at the Fillmore Center will begin this month, clearing the way for a new semi-circular colonnade paved with colorful tiles that will radiate outward from a fountain at the corner of Fillmore and O'Farrell Streets.

The makeover will take at least four months and cost nearly \$2 million. The owners expect it to be unveiled before the annual Fillmore Jazz Festival in early July.

"We view this as a gift to the neighborhood that will create a real sense of place in the heart of the Jazz District," said Steve Boyack, the former manager of the Fillmore Center who is now a

vice president in owner Laramar Group's Chicago headquarters.

Boyack said the new plaza will include a performance space with built-in lights and speakers to accommodate concerts, outdoor cinema and other public events. Fabric panels can be dropped into the structure to provide a backdrop and reduce winds.

"This will be a high-design space with lush landscaping and lots of built-in seating," Boyack said. "We want this to be an inviting public space."

It will also incorporate facilities for the Fillmore Farmers Market, which resumes at the end of April. Boyack said he hopes the improvements will encourage the year-round operation of the market.



Fillmore Center's new plaza will be more colorful.

Japantown Planning Kicks Into High Gear This Month

AN INTENSE MONTH of planning for the future of Japantown is beginning, with at least seven focus groups and a community meeting scheduled in February.

The general meeting on February 12, to be held from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Japanese Community and Cultural Center at 1840 Sutter Street, will include an update on the progress of the joint efforts of the San Francisco Planning Department and the Japantown Better Neighborhood Steering Committee. At the meeting, members of the public will be invited to comment on the recommendations of a coterie of consultants.

The separate focus groups will look at preliminary solutions to a series of specific issues raised in public forums last year.

In March, two sessions will be devoted to two of the most significant issues affecting Japantown's future: remaking

■ PRIORITIES FOR JAPANTOWN

A number of priorities have been identified by the community during the first year of planning for the future of Japantown. Rated most important are:

- Maintaining and enhancing Japanese design
- Maintaining the "feel" — scale, size and character — of the neighborhood
- Addressing building heights, bulk, shadow, wind impact of new development
- Opening up the malls and Peace Plaza to Geary Blvd. and Post Street
- Addressing the high-rise tower proposed at 1481 Post
- Providing inter-generational entertainment and gathering space
- Providing financial programs to retain small businesses
- Developing a museum or cultural center
- Ensuring space for existing small businesses
- Creating mixed-use space for housing, retail and institutional use
- Providing financial programs to retain community non-profits

Japan Center and the proposed 38-story condo building at 1481 Post Street.

A full schedule of the meetings is posted online at japantown.sfpplanning.org, along with an invitation for public comment.

At a December gathering, the new owners of Japan Center presented a number of options for change, all of which would result in turning the center inside out, with shops opening onto Post Street and Geary

Bldv. Some of the concepts include a complete rebuilding of the center, in some instances attempting to create the ambience of a village with open-air pathways. In some of the plans new open space would compensate for encroaching onto the Japantown Peace Plaza, which is a city park.

One of the problems to be worked out is the disruption of current businesses while much of the center is demolished and rebuilt.

The proposed 38-story condo project at 1481 Post Street continues to be a concern. Directors of the Japantown Task Force worry about the precedent the building would set. However, task force executive director Robert Hamaguchi pointed out that if the complex has 400 units, the developer will be required to make 60 of them affordable, or build 80 units somewhere within a one-mile radius, or pay a substantial fee.

No New Name for Jazz District; Maybe Eddy St.

JUST AS ACTIVISTS are pushing a new plan to rename part of Eddy Street to honor black nationalist Marcus Garvey, the Redevelopment Agency has quietly dropped a plan to rename the entire Fillmore Jazz District.

Gaynelle Armstrong, project manager for the agency's work in the Western Addition, had proposed that the area be renamed the African-American Jazz Preservation District on Fillmore.

She got a cool reception when she presented the idea in December to the Citizens Advisory Council, which tabled the proposal until a future meeting. Armstrong said recently she has abandoned the idea.

"I'm not going to bring it up again," she said. "It was my idea. It may have been a bad idea, but I was surprised to hear somebody say I insulted them."

At the December meeting, club owner Agonater Shiferaw called the proposal an insult to many in the neighborhood.

"We need an economic development plan," he said. "Don't change the name. It would be much better to get 10 more black-owned businesses on the street."

Michael Johnson, who developed the Fillmore Heritage Center, which includes Yoshi's jazz club, also opposed the idea, saying it was better to "maintain the area's identity as a cross-cultural destination."

A group called Brothers for Change has proposed that six blocks of Eddy Street, from Laguna to Divisadero, be renamed Marcus Garvey Way. The mayor and Board of Supervisors have approved the plan.



Going ... going ... staying. The often vandalized blue glass panels will remain on the bridge at Geary and Fillmore.

Blue Bridge Will Remain and Be Repaired Again

DESPITE AN earlier recommendation that it be removed and relocated or put into storage, "Blue," the public artwork on the bridge at Fillmore and Geary, will remain in place.

At a recent meeting, the Citizens Advisory Council was told by officials from the Redevelopment Agency, which commissioned the artwork, that it would be too expensive to take it down.

"It will cost at least \$300,000, and perhaps as much as \$500,000, to remove it,"

the Redevelopment Agency's Gaynell Armstrong told the group. "And that doesn't include storage."

Armstrong said it would cost about \$20,000 to repair the glass panels and another \$20,000 each year to maintain them. She noted the bridge may be changed as part of a new Geary transit plan.

The blue glass panels etched with words reflecting the area's disparate ethnic groups have been repeatedly vandalized since the artwork was installed a decade ago. Some

of the glass panels have already been replaced, some more than once.

"This thing is an eyesore," said Barbara Meskunas, vice chair of the advisory council. "If we're not going to take it down, it needs to be fixed."

Rev. Arnold Townsend, who chairs the council, said the problems are caused by rowdy fans attending concerts next door at the Fillmore Auditorium.

"As long as it's there, it's going to be vandalized," he said.

Hot Prowl Arrest Pacific and Steiner Streets December 2, 2:30 p.m.

A pedestrian observed a man climbing over a tradesman's door. The witness flagged down a passing patrol car. A second officer came to assist. Together, the officers pushed open the door. Inside was a staircase; a man was loitering on the deck at the top of the stairs. On the handrail of the deck, the officers found a knife with white paint residue on its blade. The suspect was detained.

Officers then questioned two women at the residence; neither of them knew the suspect, nor had they given anyone permission to come onto their property. The suspect was booked at Northern Station.

Aggravated Assault With Gun or Homicide Geary and Laguna Streets December 14, 8:45 p.m.

Officers received a report that shots had been fired. They found shell casings at the scene. As the officers were interviewing witnesses, dispatch was alerted that a gunshot victim had been admitted to San Francisco General.

Officers went to the hospital to interview the victim, who was in surgery when they arrived. Later they learned that the victim had died. The incident is still under investigation.

Robbery With a Gun Van Ness Avenue and Ellis Street December 19, 3:25 p.m.

An officer responded to a business after a report of a robbery. The store employee told the officer that the suspect had entered the store and began looking at cellphones. He waited until the other customers left the store. Then he pulled a gun from be-

New Local Safety Program Launched

A LOCAL RESIDENT who lives across the street from the Pacific Heights School at Jackson and Webster is organizing a new neighborhood watch program.

While the primary purpose of the group is safety—the neighborhood market below her apartment was recently robbed—organizer Kimberly Merlitti says she is also concerned about an increase in graffiti and marijuana smoke in the area.

The SAFE—Safety Awareness for Everyone—program was originated by the San Francisco Police Department,

but has since been spun off as a private non-profit organization still funded in part by the Police Department.

To be most effective, Merlitti says this SAFE effort will focus on the immediate area within one to two blocks of the Jackson and Webster intersection.

A meeting for interested neighbors will be held on February 19 at 8 p.m. in the second floor conference room of Pets Unlimited, at 2343 Fillmore Street. More information is available from Merlitti at 730-0023 or merlitti@sbqglobal.net.

neath his sweatshirt and told an employee to empty all the cash drawers.

A new customer entered the store. The suspect ordered the employees and the customer to go to the back of the store. He put several employees into a back room; the rest waited in the hallway. The employees heard a single gun shot. They did not know if anyone had been shot.

Then the suspect ordered an employee to open the safe. The employee complied, and gave the suspect the money. The employees were ordered to lie on the floor and warned not to call the police.

The suspect was described as a black male, 20 to 25 years old, 5 feet 10 inches tall, with black hair and brown eyes. He was wearing a blue beanie with a small puff ball on top, a hoodie and a long-sleeved blue shirt. No one was injured during the incident; the gun had been fired as a warning. The suspect fled the scene.

Aggravated Assault Van Ness Avenue and Post Street December 20, 11:20 p.m.

Officers received a call about an assault. When they arrived, the injured man was already in an ambulance, with a swollen red eye and a bloody, swollen lip. Witnesses reported that they had seen the suspect push the man to the ground. The assailant punched the man with his fist, then got up and kicked him in the head.

Officers were unable to get a statement because the man injured in the beating was intoxicated. However, based on the witnesses' statements, officers were able to arrest the suspect. He was booked at Northern Station.

Aggravated Assault With Vehicle Sacramento Street and Van Ness Avenue December 21, 7:01 a.m.

Officers responded to a report of a pos-

sible hit and run. When they arrived, an injured woman was receiving medical attention at the scene. She informed the officers that she knew the suspect. She had been shopping in a store when the suspect approached her. She did not want to speak to him and ignored him. She then left the store and began walking to her car.

The suspect drove up alongside the woman, who shouted at the suspect to leave her alone. The suspect then grabbed the woman's arm and pulled her into the driver's side window of the car, forcing her to run alongside the vehicle. The woman lost her footing and fell; she was dragged for 30 feet alongside the car. The suspect had fled the scene by the time police arrived.

The matter is being forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

Shooting Gough and Ellis Streets January 12, 8:15 p.m.

Officers responded to a call summoning them to the Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory School gym after a report of a shooting there. They arrived to find a victim unconscious and not breathing. The officers rendered medical aid at the scene and requested additional medical aid, but the victim was pronounced dead at the scene. The homicide is being investigated.

Malicious Mischief Sutter and Fillmore Streets January 13, 6:30 p.m.

Witnesses reported an act of vandalism in progress. Officers arrived to find a suspect repeatedly kicking a glass door, causing it to break. The subject, who was visibly intoxicated, was placed under arrest and booked at Northern Station.

STREET TALK

Mall developers check out Fillmore

It was hard to know whether to be flattered or threatened when a crew from one of the largest developers of shopping centers on the east coast visited Fillmore last month.

About 50 real estate specialists from Evans & Avant spent a day here, visiting businesses and hosting a private dinner at Vivande. "We want to see how to do it right," said one of the company's executives, who added that her crew was also looking for ideas at Santana Row in San Jose.

SPOTTED: A reception on Fillmore last month brought the return of Iris Fuller, the creative genius behind Fillamento, whose store sparked the renaissance of Upper Fillmore when she opened it in the early '80s. It was as if the locals had spotted a rock star. "We loved Fillamento," "We miss it so much," "It was like a design museum," admirers told her. Fuller is now living in Sonoma, but still hankers for the big city, and is said to be involved in a project to create a new store not far from Fillmore.

NEW SHOPS OPENING: Yet another women's boutique is coming to the space just vacated by Hydra at 2191 Fillmore... and yet another spa is coming to the long-vacant space that formerly housed the Aneu Skin Center at 2328 Fillmore.

Nice guys finish first: So says the Bay Guardian in a glowing review of Cassia, at 2101 Sutter, concluding, "It's not a destination restaurant but a neighborhood one, and the neighbors, having reclaimed the space after a long struggle, seem to be pleased."

RETAIL REPORT

Another Obituary at the Victorian House

With its top volunteer gone, one of Fillmore's oldest thrift shops will close

SOME SAID the Victorian House Thrift Shop would never survive without Audrey Clock, the longtime lead volunteer who died December 5 at age 91.

They were right. The Victorian House, at 2033 Fillmore, will soon close after more than three decades as a neighborhood charitable fundraiser, first for the Presbyterian Hospital ladies guild and, more recently, for the California Pacific Medical Center Foundation.

Foundation leaders "called me in and asked me if I thought we could make a profit," said manager Nathan Howard, Audrey Clock's close friend she handpicked 19 years ago to run the shop. "I had to tell them no."

Howard pulled his own plug, he said, because his corps of volunteers has dwindled and his rent has multiplied—many times. The hospital paid \$2,500 a month when the store moved to its current location in 1998. Now the rent is going up from \$8,000 to \$13,000—plus a monthly add-on for the building's upkeep, taxes and utilities.

With about 2,000 square feet, the store has been long sought by commercial real estate agents with clients eager to be on the



"Eventually all thrift shops will die," says Victorian House manager Nathan Howard, with the late Audrey Clock.

stretch of Fillmore between Jackson and Bush, which continues to be the among the city's most desirable commercial districts outside Union Square.

Several national retailers have con-

sidered the space, and the search is now said to be down to a final three, including one retailer on the same block who wants to expand.

"There's no closing date yet," said Howard. For now, it's business as usual at the Victorian House, and donations are still being accepted for a big closing sale.

"It's part of the bigger economic picture of the evolving scene," said Howard. "Eventually all thrift shops will die."

He admitted Audrey's death had a big impact on the store.

"Coming to work used to be entertaining when Audrey was here," he said. "But now it's no fun at all."

He acknowledged, though, "It wasn't going to survive anyway." "I had to tell them, it's my professional opinion that you can't make a go of it," Howard said. And he is indeed a professional, a lifelong part of the local thrift shop scene. He first worked at the Bargain Mart on Divisadero Street, then at Seconds to Go a couple of blocks up Fillmore. That's where he met his longtime companion, Fay Dara, who still works there.

"We hope to make a graceful exit," Howard said of the coming closure. "I know the neighborhood will miss us. The Victorian House is part of its social history."

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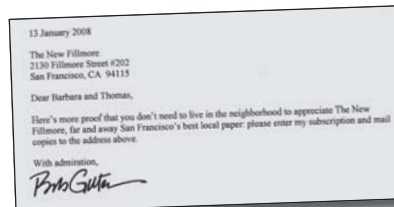
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The Archbishop Cometh

Enthroned as the new Anglican leader, and at home on Sacramento Street

By THOMAS REYNOLDS

THAT distinguished looking gentleman with the silver hair and the purple vestment you see walking around the neighborhood got still more distinguished last month: He was enthroned as the new archbishop of the Anglican Province of Christ the King, which includes most of the traditional Anglicans in the western United States.

Among those in the pews to witness his elevation was the gang from the bar at Florio on Fillmore Street. The Most Rev. James Eugene Provence often has dinner at the bar with the regulars.

"I've had some serious theological discussions there," he says. "People will sit there and, after a couple of pops, they'll ask a question."

The archbishop has been in the neighborhood for nearly nine years as the parish priest of St. Thomas Anglican Church, which is housed at 2725 Sacramento Street in a perfectly proportioned small chapel that would be at home in an Italian hill town. He came to St. Thomas after serving at several other California congregations, most recently at St. Stephens on Oakville Grade in Napa Valley, a rather more rustic setting than Pacific Heights.

"Here we've got flush toilets," he chuckles. "There we had an outhouse."

His reverence reflects his proclivity for a pragmatic approach to faith.

"One of the main jobs is to personalize it, and you only do that if you're with people," he says. "It's really important to me that people see how to apply things practically in what they're going to do that afternoon."

FOR ALL OF HIS modern sensibility, the archbishop's religion is something of a throwback. The province he heads was formed in 1977 when a group broke away from the Episcopal Church after major changes in practices and theology that moved the church toward more social action. So the breakaway group renewed its commitment to the 1928 Book of Common Prayer and



Archbishop James Eugene Provence remains parish priest at St. Thomas Church at 2725 Sacramento Street, a traditional Anglican congregation with a small chapel that would be at home in an Italian hill town.

to traditional forms of doctrine and liturgy, including a priesthood open only to men.

"Women priests—that became the lightning rod," said Archbishop Provence. "But there were significant changes for men, too, that we rejected."

Then he was still Jim Provence, a broadcast engineer in radio, television and later film. He was a layman in an Episcopal Church and became a founder of one of the new Anglican congregations. Learning about the theological changes led to his decision to go to seminary in 1980. Ordained as a deacon in 1983 and as a priest in 1989, he became bishop of the western diocese in 2003, and is now only the second archbishop of the Anglican Province of Christ the King.

ARCHBISHOP PROVENCE was elected and immediately assumed his responsibilities last summer when the first and only archbishop retired after nearly 30 years in the position. But the ceremonial passing of authority occurred on January 25 with his enthronement. It was a ritualistic ceremony full of tradition. He knocked at the door of St. Peter's Pro-Cathedral in Oakland, was escorted to the cathedra, given the pastoral staff and greeted by the bishops before celebrating mass.

Even with his broader role, he remains the parish priest at St. Thomas, just as others in the church hierarchy also continue to serve a congregation in addition to their administrative responsibilities.

"It makes certain the people making the decisions are living with them," he says.

He acknowledges it is a bit ironic to find a conservative congregation, made up of about 100 members, in the heart of a liberal city.

"We have lots of people from the financial world," he says. "Our members tend to be more traditional and more politically conservative — although we don't talk politics," he quickly adds.

"It does present difficulties to be a conservative church in

a liberal town," he says, but he points out that he was born in San Francisco, and that his ancestors were in the Bay Area since 1860. "Being a traditional person in San Francisco, while having its challenges as a priest, doesn't particularly challenge me the way it would someone who grew up in Omaha."

HE HAS BECOME a familiar presence on the streets of the neighborhood, immediately recognizable by his clerical collar and brilliant purple shirt, the color worn by Anglican bishops and archbishops.

"That's one of the reasons I like this neighborhood so much," he says. "I can walk it, and live it, and shop it. We don't have to talk about theology. We can talk about life."

St. Thomas is "to a great extent a neighborhood congregation," he says, and he sees it as his mission to reach out to what he calls "the larger neighborhood parish" outside the walls of the church.

"I do bring in people I meet in Florio or Eliza's or outside Mollie Stone's," he says. "Some of the people I meet make the transition to become members of St. Thomas. I'm not out there selling it, but I'm available to listen."

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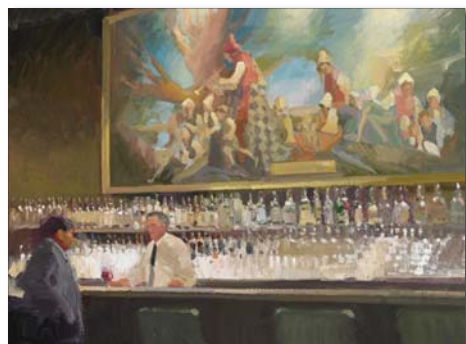
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FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS, I have been working at Toujours, the petite lingerie shop on Sacramento Street just around the corner from Fillmore. I've been a salesclerk and bra-fitter, but also a therapist and a shoulder to cry on — and every now and then a disappointment, when I had to say "No, I simply can't get that for you in purple" or "No, I don't think you can make it work; it just doesn't fit."

I've made friends, made an enemy once — thank goodness we've made up — and had the pleasure of working with some of the most loving and generous women around.

But perhaps the best perk of working in a classy little neighborhood lingerie shop is the opportunity to meet lots of people who have loving, lasting romances — not just relationships, not just marriages, but actual romances — the kind we all long for and dream about, the blushing, giggling, toe-curling, hot, satisfying relationships that last.

In my first year in the shop, I met a man who was shopping for his wife. He had a smile on his face as he handed me a simple cotton gown and fleecy robe and said, "Wrap it up."

"What's the occasion?" I asked.

He answered, "We've been married for 25 years, and our anniversary is coming up."

"Wow," I said, "what's the secret?"

He paused for a moment before answering. "Whoever you are," he said slowly, "whoever your partner is, you will change. You can rely on that. The key is to be curious about the changing. Be open and curious about the pull of your own heart — and be open to, and curious about, the ways your partner will change. It's not easy, but it is an adventure in love."

What began as an attempt at small talk became something much greater. In that moment, I knew I would learn more than lingerie from this job.

Since then, I have often asked similar questions. "Got any advice?" "Any words of wisdom to share?" It turns out there are lots of local couples who have passed the 20 year mark, and more than a handful who have 40 or 50 years together.

After years of questions, the patterns in the answers are clear and undeniable. Couples who make it all seem to be working from the same instruction manual. Almost all of them acknowledge difficult times and trying experiences that tested the bounds of their love. But they have survived and in many cases they have thrived.

As we approach another Valentine's Day, a day for lovers of love and romance everywhere, I offer you the simple secrets of lasting love, as revealed in a neighborhood lingerie shop.

The Simple Secrets of Lasting Love

As revealed in a neighborhood lingerie shop

By BROOKE WELCH



"Spanish Dancer," by Ruth Bernhard (1906-2007), acclaimed photographer of the nude, longtime local resident and a lover of love.

1. *Be honest.*

It seems obvious that if you want a successful relationship, you shouldn't lie to your partner. But the essence of this commitment is deeper than you may think. The first person you must address with honesty is yourself.

A couple is made up of two separate individuals. Each person must be able to own who he or she truly is, and then support each other in this endeavor. One woman stated it this way: "Let him have his life, and don't make him feel bad about it. Do the same for yourself."

2. *Be friends.*

Successful couples enjoy one another. One woman stated, "We hang out together, like good friends," and then giggled in a way that suggested she relished their time together. This does not mean they have all the same interests and goals. In fact, doing everything together seems to be a certain road to disaster.

While we're on the topic of friends: Get some. People who have lasting, satisfying relationships with a partner

have lasting, satisfying relationships with others. You will have more appreciation for the time you spend together if you take some time apart, and you will likely discover things about yourself that will make your time together more interesting.

3. *Accept change.*

Bonfire Madigan, a young, used-to-be-local musician, once wrote, "Change is necessary, inevitable and good." Make this your mantra.

This is the essence of that first, fateful conversation I had in the shop. By accepting the inevitability of change, you can make friends with it. If you befriend change, you will become curious about it, and if you are curious about something, you tend to stay in a relationship with it.

4. *Keep smiling.*

Almost everyone I've talked with says how important it is to keep your sense of humor. "If you can't laugh, you're lost," said one. "Let down your hair and let out your joy. Be the couple that makes everyone sick with all their inside jokes. Laughter is good medicine. It relieves stress, lifts the

mood and can make a minute seem like a lifetime, in a good way.

5. *Don't skip the sex.*

A mutually pleasurable physical relationship is essential to a lasting, successful partnership, and not just for those with a penchant for lingerie. Sex can help build intimacy and trust. By being a giving and grateful sexual partner, you will let your lover know you care about his or her pleasure, too.

And it can be fun. "He still pinches me every morning on the way out the door," one satisfied customer recalled.

If you are not getting what you want or need from your sexual encounters, do something about it. There really is no excuse for living unfulfilled today, with all of the manuals and videos and other ways to learn what feels good and is satisfying. Of course, this will take honesty, and it may change as the years together go by. You will have to try, and you may even have to laugh about it now and then.

Here's hoping you get the love you're seeking this Valentine's Day.

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MOMA PHOTOGRAPHY

Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

Investing in a restaurant is the ultimate toy in a town obsessed with food and wine

By BARBARA KATE REPA

Neighborhood residents have watched with a mixture of pride, awe and a touch of despair as long lines of eager food aficionados have queued up outside SPQR nearly every mealtime since the place opened its doors at 1911 Fillmore last September.

The phenomenon is brought to you, at least in part, by Shari Spakes and David Gantenbein, two of the 25 or so investors who ponied up money to fund the restaurant.

Wine director Shelly Lindgren and her husband Greg Lindgren, Executive Chef Nate Appleman and attorney Victoria Libin together own the majority of SPQR. They are the same core team behind A16, the wildly popular southern Italian restaurant in the Marina.

The four founders' connection to the investing couple was first sparked when Shelley Lindgren became one of Spakes' clients at Pacific Heights Skincare and the two struck up a friendship. "Initially, it was a women-supporting-other-women-in-business thing," says Spakes. "I wanted to invest in someone I really care about and believe in."

The founders' strategy was to have a whole network of investors. Thirty of them anteed up for A16 — and many of those same people put up funding for SPQR.

Libin, a San Francisco entertainment lawyer, was the



KONSTEN LOKEN

architect of the investment plans for both eateries, finding the locations, negotiating leases and putting together the terms of the investment agreements.

"Investing in a restaurant is extremely risky, which is something I try to convey to everyone from the beginning. Everyone must be an accredited investor who can afford to lose every dollar he or she puts in," Libin says. "You can have all the ingredients for a thriving restaurant, but you have no control over earthquakes and economic downturns."

David Gantenbein and Shari Spakes (left) are among the happy investors in SPQR, which has been a whirl of activity since it opened last September. Below, the ubiquitous Roman symbol that provided the name.



"Given the density of foot traffic, I always thought it could support more good restaurants."

While working on another restaurant deal, Libin learned that Chez Nous owner Pascal Rigo was thinking of relinquishing the spot at 1911 Fillmore. That bit of news sent the principals into high gear, estimating how much they'd need to raise to purchase the business opportunity from Rigo, re-do the space, buy opening inventory and set aside a month of labor reserves.

While the exact terms of SPQR's financing are not public, Libin says investors typically put up about 40 to 49 percent, then get 100 percent of the profits until they break even. "Think of it as preferred stock," she says.

And importantly, all investors must be accredited — meaning they must earn at least \$300,000 per year and have \$1 million in assets. While all deals differ, \$10,000 would be a typical low-end investment contribution for a restaurant start-up, according to Libin.

GANTENBEIN AND SPAKES say they're confident of the owners' abilities. "Greg's good at finding a funky place and making it sing," says Gantenbein, a Yahoo techie who plays guitar in a rock band. As co-owner of three San Francisco hot watering holes — Rosewood Lounge, 15 Romolo and Rye — Lindgren is no stranger to the music of success.

"We just decided whether to invest by asking ourselves how we would feel if we lost it all. And we knew we had an ace in the hole: Shelley would feel so bad that she would give us free wine for the rest of our lives if the deal went bad," says Spakes.

TO PAGE 10 ▶

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So You Want to Invest

Comfortable going to Vegas and losing \$10,000?

"I THINK a lot of people think it's glamorous to invest. But the first thing I would say to people is don't put in money you can't lose. Restaurants are unpredictable and you have to be fully prepared for that," says attorney Victoria Libin, who helped structure the investment deals for both A16 and SPQR. "If you're comfortable going to Vegas and losing \$10,000, then you can be a restaurant investor."

In addition to that broad warning, Libin offers potential investors a number of tangible tips.

1. Make sure you understand all the investment terms. Get a clear picture of your profit share, liquidation preferences and vesting. Get the answers to any questions you may have before signing on to the deal.
2. Look for managing partners who have skin in the game. Those who have money and equity and blood, sweat and tears invested in a place will be more likely to be motivated to make it succeed and show a profit — or dig out of a hole in tough times.
3. Make sure management has transparency and good communication skills. "Many people get so caught up with the excitement of being involved with food and wine that they forget to be concerned with the more mundane business matters," says Libin. She advises asking the difficult questions: Who's going to enforce the employment laws? Is there someone who will pay the taxes on time? Are the health and liability insurance covered?
4. For those who choose to ignore the first three rules, there's a fourth to consider. Look at investing as a fun lark, and sit back and let things go where they will.

'A16 Was Such a Big Hit, How Could SPQR Fail'

FROM PAGE 9

"And being an investor in SPQR is way less scary than being an investor in A16," the group's first venture together, Spikes says. "A16 was just such a hit, we figured 'How could we fail? Nothing's gold-plated here at SPQR. But it's like — perfect," she says, eyeing the table settings of earth-colored Heath pottery.

ONCE THE HARD PART of writing the check is over, there is little for investors to do but wait and hope. "It's very laissez-faire. We don't do anything. We're just happy to be a part of it," says Gantenbein.

Backing the restaurants also brought the couple benefits beyond the occasional preferential seating, discounts on wine and advance tastes of the food that would be served. "They're both in neighborhoods

we wouldn't have come to before," says Gantenbein. "Now we're regulars."

The pair also say they're pleased to receive periodic dividend checks from their investment, and note that they made back the money they put into A16 — plus more — in two years. They used the money to fund the investment in SPQR. "Now, all the money we make is gravy. In hindsight, I wish we had given them more," says Spikes.

Along with the investment comes the payoff of camaraderie. "It's like Cheers. Everyone knows your name," said Gantenbein at a recent SPQR dinner after the chef, hostess and several members of the waitstaff stopped by the table to serve up some chitchat. "And it's great to walk into a place and see everyone happy, eating good food."

AN INSIDER'S TALE

How Zao Came and Went

By LAURA WERLIN

IT'S A LONG way from Vancouver to London to the intersection of Fillmore and California, but that was the route that led to the creation of the Zao Noodle Bar, soon to serve its final bowl of noodles in the neighborhood before being replaced by Pizzeria Delfina.

Back around 1995, my ex-husband Art and I were wandering the streets of Vancouver and noticed that noodle bars far outnumbered every other kind of eating establishment. We'd previously traveled together to Japan, where strands of noodles seemed to match the popularity of rice grain for grain.

I loved noodle soups, and so I fantasized about the idea of opening a noodle bar in San Francisco. The foggy summers and brisk winters seemed like the perfect setting for a casual restaurant serving hot, healthy soups of flavorful broths and noodles.

We even came up with a name for my fantasy noodle bar. We called it Florazuki, a play on my first name combined with a Japanese-sounding suffix.

Our next journey took us to London, where we visited a spectacularly bustling, utterly delicious noodle bar called Wagamama, which has since expanded worldwide into other parts of Europe, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and two locations in Boston. Watching the throngs of Londoners digging into warming bowls of broth and slurping long strands of soba noodles — and following suit ourselves — I knew that Florazuki was an idea whose time had come.

AS SERENDIPITY would have it, a friend of a friend named Adam Wilner, who had loads of experience in the San Francisco restaurant business, asked to meet with Art about a business concept he had developed. Art was in the investment business and Adam knew Art might be able to provide the



Business at Zao was booming in 2000 when local photographer Jean Collier Hurley captured this image.

Goodbye Zao, Hello Pizzeria Delfina

A branch of the widely praised Pizzeria Delfina is coming to Fillmore to replace the Zao Noodle Bar at 2406 California Street. The change will take place within 30 to 60 days, depending on when the transfer of the beer and wine license is approved.

The site is the one that owners Anne and Craig Stoll wanted, but didn't get, a decade ago when they opened Delfina Restaurant on 18th Street in the Mission District. They opened the first Pizzeria Delfina next door two years ago. Plans for the new location are still tentative, but Stoll said they may include a wood-burning oven and perhaps some dishes from the acclaimed restaurant.

The new Pizzeria Delfina on California is only a few doors from Dino's, the venerable Fillmore institution at the corner of California and Fillmore. But Anne Stoll said the two are "completely different conceptually."

funding — or at least the advice — he would need to go forward. Adam revealed his concept: a noodle bar — something for which Art had a thorough and visceral appreciation. The two of them met, and not long after, Art agreed to be an investor and Adam's dream got underway.

This is when the fun began for me. While Florazuki was relegated to it-might-have-been status, it turned out I got to enjoy the best parts of the journey without the headaches. Adam ferreted us with pan Asian-style recipes, many of which he personally developed, while testing the eventual menu. By the time Zao Noodle Bar opened its first location on University Avenue in Palo Alto, I can safely say I had tasted everything on the menu, sometimes more than once. The hungry and the curious practically stamped the place, clearly

demonstrating the pent-up desire for nourishing, flavorful and healthy food. Adam continued to refine the menu, calling in Sacramento restaurant owner and cookbook author — and occasional *Chronicle* food section contributor — Mai Pham to refine the menu and create a few authentic Vietnamese noodle dishes. Again I got to weigh in on the results, which were delicious. Meanwhile, plans for future locations were underway.

Fast-forward a couple of years, and Zao opened its doors in our neighborhood on California Street. The location proved to be an instant hit. Just as in Palo Alto, people came out of the cold and into the warmth and comfort of Zao's noodle and rice dishes.

Despite its success, the California Street location — San Francisco's first and last Zao — will soon close its doors.

Three other San Francisco locations — in the Castro, the Sunset and the Marina — have already closed. The cost of doing business here was just too high. Other Zao locations in Oregon, Washington, Emeryville and Palo Alto remain vibrant.

NOODLES ARE SYMBOLIC of long life, and although that may not have proven true for Zao in San Francisco — or for my marriage, for that matter — there's something to be said for being in a neighborhood where a noodle bar stands beside a pizza joint, across from a Mexican place and around the corner from a Peruvian eatery, a chocolate cafe, an authentic and beloved Italian eat-in and take-out establishment and a New Orleans-inspired restaurant, among so many others.

Those of us who live in the neighborhood know that diversity is our true identity, both in our population and the food we put on our forks. Although I'm sad to see Zao go, especially given the personal connection, I welcome Pizzeria Delfina as it takes over the location, knowing that another vital thread is being woven into the tapestry that is uniquely the Fillmore.

And who knows? Maybe now there's an opportunity for Florazuki.

Laura Werlin is a neighborhood resident and the author of *Laura Werlin's Cheese Essentials and The All American Cheese and Wine Book*, among others. Her website is www.laurawerlin.com.

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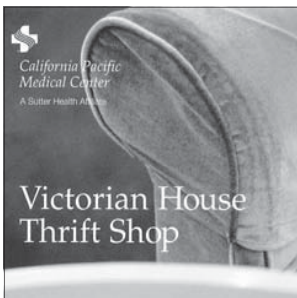
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2514 Greenwich St	2	2	2	1364	10-Jan	1,279,000	1,279,000
2516 Greenwich St	2	2	2	1475	10-Jan	1,335,000	1,315,000
3450 Clay St	5	4.5	2	3346	18-Dec	3,995,000	3,800,000



Designed by noted architect Willis Polk, 2820 Pacific (left) is a rare street-to-street home, with a front door on Pacific and a backside on Broadway (below).



Wintertime, and the action is slower

We are now in the heart of our winter market, which is traditionally slower, and does not pick up in earnest until late February. There were approximately 50 percent fewer recorded sales last month than the month before. However, there were still a couple of important closings: After several months on the market, both 3730 Washington and 2820 Pacific — two grand Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights mansions — finally sold.

While the volume of listings is still low, a few are noteworthy: ■ In early January, 2702 California came on the market priced at \$2,995,000. With five bedrooms and almost 6,000 square feet, it is a good value for the neighborhood and is likely to go into contract quickly.

■ Also early in the month, a new TIC project was listed at 2727 Jackson. There are two remodeled one-bedroom units and one studio listed between \$389,000 and \$599,000. The Ellis Act has been invoked on the building, so potential buyers should be aware of the condo conversion and rental issues associated with such a building before making an offer.

Through 2007, the San Francisco market — and this neighborhood in particular — remained strong. But with the stock market on a roller coaster and general agreement that the national economy is in a recession, the picture for San Francisco housing may not be as rosy this year. Nonetheless, the first few weeks of 2008 have not appeared much different from recent years. Open houses and broker tours are busy. And while some buyers are waiting on the sidelines, others are making offers and properties are going into contract.

— Data and commentary provided by JOHN FITZGERALD, a co-owner of the Byzantium Brokerage and an agent at Pacific Union. Contact him at jfitzgerald@pacunion.com or call 345-3034.

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RENOVATING AN ATTIC | FOURTH IN A SERIES

Then Came the Rain

Grand plans interrupted by weather and water

I AM WRITING this in exile. Our project to convert the attic of our 1890 Victorian into a loft-like living space has hit some unexpected turbulence, as have we.

Last month we were beginning to patch and repair the ceiling, which was insulated and sheetrocked in an earlier renovation about a decade ago.

But the insulation was wet — some of it very wet. The roofer was consulted, but there was no leak.

It appears the problem arose because the 6-inch space between the ceiling and the roof was stuffed with insulation, leaving no room for air circulation. As a result, the top of the house had been sweating every day as it heated up and cooled down, which resulted in a disintegrating ceiling filled with sopping wet insulation.

It would all have to come down — all of the wallboard and all of the insulation. It would all have to be rebuilt, with the meticulous installation of rigid insulation — thinner, with room for air to circulate, but each piece must be cut to fit precisely between the rafters. The roofer would have to come back and cut vents into the roof to allow in the air.

At which point the big winter storm hit, and the gutters backed up and poured water into the house.

We decided to escape for the holidays. We'd forego a Christmas tree and decorations because the house was a war zone. My wife proposed that we go to a hotel and pretend to be festive for a couple of days. So we checked into the Huntington on Nob Hill.

Now this was more like it.

The Huntington had housed high-class apartments before the United Nations was created across the street in 1945 and the owners foresaw that San Francisco would become an ever more international city needing ever more hotels. The Huntington



The jumble of rafters rises to 15 feet in places — and all of them had to be stripped bare for new insulation.

is still family owned, and one of the five brothers and sisters who run it now saw that we got an expansive suite overlooking the lights on the trees in Huntington Park.

We crossed the street to Grace Cathedral and walked the labyrinth, then stopped to take in the Christmas decorations at the Fairmont and the Mark Hopkins. Dinner downstairs at The Big 4 fit the mood — why not have the elk Rossini and a good lusty Zinfandel?

The next day, Christmas Eve, we settled in by the hotel pool, otherwise known as the Nob Hill Spa. Friends later told us it was bitterly cold on the street, but the deck on the south side of the pool was sunny and warm. Carlos rolled out lunch — a seared scallop salad and an icy bucket of champagne. And four oatmeal raisin cookies. We caught up on magazines and both dug into new books we'd been wanting to read.

Christmas Eve dinner? Let's just have room service. And sleep like children all snuggled in bed, a few blocks from home but a million miles away.

It didn't last. Now it's nearly February and there's little visible progress. But the builders still show up promptly at 7 most mornings, and they're working hard and doing everything right.

As construction has dragged on, with its noise and disruption, she's rented an office for work, and I've rented an apartment for sleep. Surely better days are ahead. Our project and our priorities will get back on track. And we'll get back our joy.

When you go to the Polls on February 5, the Chamber recommends...

Yes on A: Fix our Parks

Proposition A will extend critically important park and recreation center repairs and improvements to every city neighborhood and create new parks along the eastern waterfront — all with no increase in the property tax rate.

Yes on B: Keep Police on the Street

San Francisco is short up to 300 police officers, with 600 more set to retire in the next four years. Proposition B will encourage experienced police officers to postpone retirement to give increased recruitment a chance to reduce the shortage, all at no additional cost to the pension plan.

No on C: Keep Alcatraz in the National Park System

Proposition C would make it city policy to urge the National Park Service to give Alcatraz Island to the city for a peace and mediation center. Alcatraz is a National Landmark, part of Golden Gate National Park and should remain that way.



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Can Spring Be Far Behind?

The daffodils are planted and a cleanup is coming

Alta Plaza Park and Lafayette Park will both get an early spring cleaning on February 23 during the annual visit of the city's Community Clean Team.

Volunteers are welcome at both parks to join the effort, scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon. Lunch will be provided.

At Alta Plaza, the focus will be on basic cleaning and weeding. At Lafayette Park, the project is to plant the playground. If it rains within 48 hours of the event, the painting will be canceled.

Another activity that day may involve looking for sprouting daffodils. In December, volunteers at Alta Plaza Park planted 1,500 bulbs donated by California Pacific Medical Center. In mid-January, Friends of Lafayette Park planted crates of bulbs donated by nearby residents Ted and Ann Simion.

Alta Plaza Park Volunteers — a new group — chose flower beds at the entrances of the park for the bulbs. At Lafayette Park, the bulbs were planted on the slopes of the park's central hill.

Both parks now have regular volunteer work days. At Lafayette Park, a hardy corps turns out on the first Saturday morning of every month. At Alta Plaza Park, the work day is the first Sunday of the month, which is also Pug Sunday, the monthly gathering of owners of pug dogs.

Additional volunteers are welcome at both parks.

Volunteers from the Junior League prepare for springtime in Alta Plaza Park (top left). Friends of Lafayette Park plant daffodil bulbs (center) as their leader Kim Barnes (bottom left) clears ivy.



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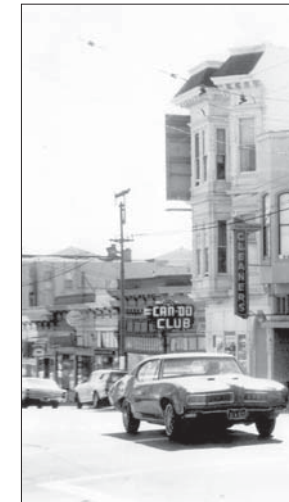
When Minnie Embraced the 'Limey Leonardo'

By NICOLA LANE

LONDON — In 1973 I was a recent graduate from art school and I traveled to the U.S. to seek fame and fortune as an artist. I traveled by Greyhound bus from New York to revisit San Francisco, the city where I was born in 1949, and where my father was first posted when he began his career as a diplomat.

In those days my specialty was painting portraits of people in the context of their home. In the search for commissions, I visited the Hoover Gallery and showed the gallery owner, Herbert Hoover, photos of my work. He gave me a commission to paint his wife, the charming Mrs. "Pinky" Hoover, who was very good to me. I painted her seated in the splendor of her drawing room, in their Pacific Heights mansion, surrounded by beautiful works of art. Meanwhile I was exploring San Francisco as much as a very impoverished young artist could. I had a lonely existence in my studio flat. But one night some friends took me to Minnie's Can-Do Club on Fillmore Street.

The minute I saw Minnie Baker regally seated by the door, I knew I wanted to paint her, but I was too nervous to ask. Pinky Hoover helped me rehearse what I was going to say. Scared but determined, I went to the Can-Do and asked to speak to Minnie. "I really want to do a portrait of you," I said, "but I can't do it for nothing. So I wonder if you would think about how much..." I faltered. I shall never forget Minnie's swift, appraising eyes taking me in. She said, "I'll pay you same as the bar staff, every Friday."



In the 70s, Minnie's Can-Do Club was at 1915 Fillmore.

And she did. I would arrive at midday when the Can-Do opened, go to the back room where the beer was stored and where I kept the painting and my palette, paints and brushes. I would set up by the front window, my back to the light, facing the length of the bar. And I painted. I asked Minnie what she wanted in the painting. She chose the new jukebox, the new Coors beer sign with its rippling waterfall, her favorite

jewelry and headscarf. I put in the ping-pong table — it was just installed — and the TV, with Senator Sam Ervin, scourge of the Watergate trials, on the screen. You can also see the walls painted silver and the women's restroom.

It took a long time. The Can-Do became my place of warmth and safety. My English accent was exotic. "Hell now," I heard one regular say, "she sounds just like Basil Rathbone." And I became known as "The Limey Leonardo."

Minnie was wonderful to me. She took me around to the neighborhood bars and tried to get me a commission to paint Wilt "The Stilt" Chamberlain, the retired basketball star elegantly running a very stylish bar — but he politely declined the opportunity to be painted by me. She found me work designing posters for gigs, the poetry nights, designing decorations for the retirement party of a local Chinese grocer — he loved fishing, so on the window of his shop I painted a fisherman by a river. I remember the roasting suckling pigs, with their golden roasted skin cut like armor, being carried in for the feast.

My mother came to visit me from London and was also embraced and celebrated by Minnie. With her son Aaron, she took us on an evening of fancy restaurants and bars in uptown San Francisco. She took us to her friend Connie's soul food restaurant next door to the Can-Do. My mother still has the menu — and a lovely Christmas card from Minnie showing her and Aaron holding my painting.

When the painting was finally finished there was a party in the Can-Do and it was hung above the bar. I said goodbye to Minnie, who had been such a marvelous supporter of the young, shy artist I was then. Saying goodbye was hard. She said, "The world comes to me, I stay here and people leave." I have never stopped thinking about her and her power to heal and take care of people. That's what she did for me.

I am so happy to find Minnie again. It is no surprise that instead of taking it easy at 74, Minnie is sailing around the world. She's in the merchant marine! I am so thrilled she is still here, and still grooving.

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