

MUSIC

*Mardi Gras
on Fillmore*

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ARTISANS

*He tinkers
with time*

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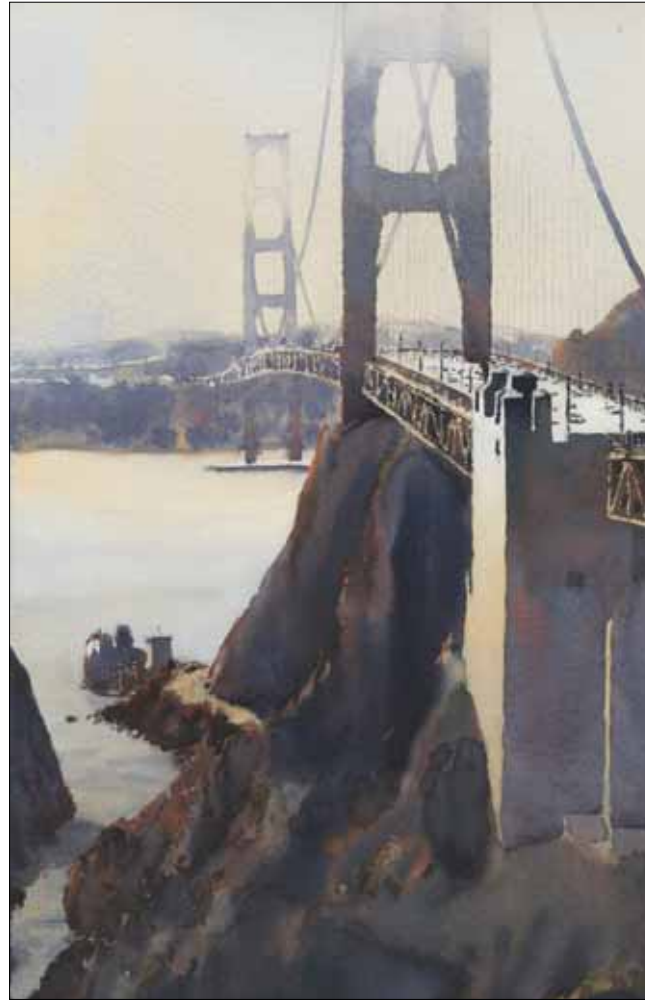
ORNITHOLOGY

*Hummingbirds
love it here, too*

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ MARCH 2011



"North Anchorage" by
MICHAEL REARDON

Making magic with water

First Michael Reardon made his mark as an architectural illustrator. Then a residency in Paris turned him into a painter. This month his watercolors of Paris and Northern California will be exhibited in the neighborhood at the Thomas Reynolds Gallery at 2291 Pine Street (at Fillmore). An opening reception with the artist will be held Friday, March 11 from 6 to 8 p.m.

A New Cafe Opens and Feels the Love

'Our style is homey and
our food is old-fashioned'

IT DIDN'T TAKE a cynic to question the need for another coffee shop and café on Fillmore Street — especially one in the exact same spot, at 2123 Fillmore, where Bittersweet and Sweet Inspiration and several others had tried and failed — and next door to recent arrival Citizen Cake, a superstar of bakery.

But less than a month after opening, the simple but stylishly black and white new spot named Jane — the realized dream of local resident Amanda Michael — appears to be just what the neighborhood had been hungering for.

Already customers are becoming fans and returning to bring their friends for a bite of lunch or to linger longer over cups and crumb-laden plates — and that's just what Michael intended.

"We wanted to make a cozy neighborhood spot here," she says. "Our style is homey and our food is old-fashioned — not high-tech pastry or elaborate desserts, but more like what your mom used to make."

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HOW DINO BEGAT SANTINO

"He's not my son.
I'm his father."

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A LIVING LABORATORY



Patrick Blanc unveils Drew School's newly planted vertical garden.

ONWARD & UPWARD

As Drew School expands, it gets a vertical garden

NATURALLY they'll have a green living roof on the new eco-conscious assembly building now nearing completion behind Drew School at California and Broderick Streets.

But they'll also have a vertical garden created by Parisian botanist-artist Patrick Blanc — a rock star among gardeners credited with inventing the concept and creating gardens on walls around the world.

Blanc was in the neighborhood last month to unveil Drew's new garden, which consists of thousands of plants that are all native California species. First the dirt was removed from the roots of the plants, then they were stapled to a three-story felt wall that is watered several times daily.

The 1,720 sq. ft. garden — Blanc's largest in the U.S. — faces Broderick Street and is visible from the sidewalk.

"What was very interesting for me," Blanc said, "it was a school much involved in artistic work. For me, it was important to have receptive students for a new kind of work with plants."

The vertical garden will be "a remarkable living and learning laboratory for our students," said Head of School Samuel Cuddeback III. He said the process of creating it had already been instructional.

"The process — the adult learning and the student learning — is a gift," he said. "This is much more than just plants being stapled to fabric."

Blanc spoke to students about the project and also lectured to a sold-out crowd at the Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park, which has its own living roof. The firm that completed the academy's roof is also creating a 2,630 sq. ft. green roof on the school's new building.



The vertical garden (left) is on a new wing that replaces a three-story Victorian.

THE NEW FILLMORE

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Connecting the neighborhood

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

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STREET TALK

Coming soon: Asian comfort food

Opening this month at 2015 Fillmore, former home of Tango Gelato, is a Vietnamese sandwich shop called Bun Mee, specializing in — you guessed it — gourmet banh mi inspired sandwiches. Under the creative eye of owner Denise Tran, who's been heard singing "money can't buy me love," the space is getting a makeover and lots of new equipment — including a massive silver Frank Gehry-esque exhaust fan on top of the building next door. Target opening date is March 19.

DUMPLINGS TOO: A few weeks later, another casual Asian eatery to be called Dumplings & Buns will open around the corner at 2411 California Street, now home of George, the pet store. It will be a take-out shop operated by the owner of the building in collaboration with the folks who run TacoBar next door. . . . But George isn't leaving. Owner Bobby Wise promises the innovative pet store will stay in the neighborhood, but he's not quite ready to announce its new location just yet. . . . Another longtime local, Cafe Kati, is closing this month. After more than 20 years at 1963 Sutter Street, owner-chef Kirk Webber hands over the location to a new place that's to be called RoosterTail Rotisserie.

WOMEN'S WEAR: New women's clothing boutiques are coming to the neighborhood. A new shop at 2119 Fillmore, formerly home of Winterbranch Gallery, is nearing completion. And more women's fashions are said to be coming to the sadly vacant Fillmore Hardware store at 1930 Fillmore and the home of Kiehl's at Fillmore and Washington — once Kiehl's makes its move to Fillmore and Pine.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



New life in an old Carnegie

The Presidio Branch library at 3150 Sacramento Street re-opens this month, the latest in a series of renovated neighborhood libraries. Few are finer. The Presidio Branch was the city's sixth, established in 1898. Its Italian Renaissance building was completed in 1921 and funded by Andrew Carnegie. The building has been updated inside and out, with the original wood shelves refurbished in its grand, light-filled reading room. The re-opening celebration is on March 26 starting at 1 p.m.

Expansion on Historic Block Is Scaled Back

ADJUST-UP between nearby residents and a developer seeking to remodel a historic home at 2507 Pacific Avenue has been resolved, with new owner JT Builders agreeing to limit the expansion of the home into the rear yard.

"We were concerned because of the historic nature of the block," said land use attorney Stephen Williams, who was retained by the Pacific Heights Residents Association. "It's completely intact. No one has ever expanded into the rear yard the way the developer proposed."

Under a settlement agreement with the residents' association, JT Builders owner Joe Toboni agreed not to expand beyond the rear of the house next door and to set back the expansion on upper levels. The hours during which work may be done were also limited.

"It's a pretty significant compromise," said Williams. He called rear yard expansion "an issue the Planning Department cares the least about, but the neighbors care the most about."

City planners had approved the builder's proposal, prompting harsh words from neighbors, some of whom have lived on the block for decades.

"There was a shouting match at the beginning," said Williams. "It really was a situation where people were misunderstanding each other."


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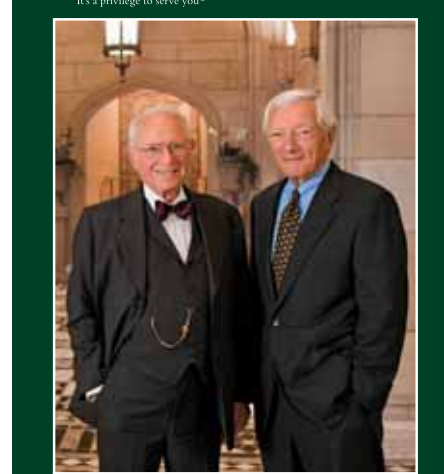
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CRIME WATCH

Burglary
Washington and Franklin Streets
January 31, 3:45 a.m.
Two people were awakened by the sounds of someone noisily rooting around in the storage area directly beneath their bedroom window. They looked out and saw a woman they did not know, so they shouted for her to leave and called the police. The woman carried an orange suitcase as she exited the building. The responding officers located her two blocks away, and learned she was already on probation for burglary.

Fraud
Van Ness and Pacific Avenues
February 4, 5:30 p.m.
A woman returned from vacation to find her home had been burglarized. At the same time, she realized an unknown individual was cashing her checks. Also around that time, a bank called the police about a person attempting to cash a fraudulent check. The teller stalled the customer until the police arrived. Police learned the same man tried to cash stolen checks the day before; the checks belonged to the woman whose home was burglarized. The suspect was placed under arrest.

Vandalism
Van Ness Avenue and California Street
February 5, 7:01 p.m.
Officers received a call from a witness who claimed to have seen an individual walking down the street scratching cars with a pair of scissors. Police located a suspect matching the witness's description; he was carrying a pair of scissors in his pocket. A total of five cars sustained damage. The suspect was placed under arrest.

Narcotics
Van Ness Avenue and Bush Street
February 8, 1:10 a.m.
Officers on patrol saw a woman riding a bicycle on the sidewalk. When they detained her for the violation, the woman stated that she did not have any identification. However, she was carrying a purse and allowed the police to search it. Inside, officers found methamphetamine and a narcotics pipe. The woman was arrested for possession of drugs.

Assault on an Officer
Van Ness Avenue and Washington Street
February 10, 3:45 p.m.
Plainclothes officers received a call concerning a domestic violence incident inside a store. The officers spoke to a woman who had been struck; she pointed to a man attempting to leave through an emergency exit. The officers shouted at him to halt, but the suspect bolted through the store, attempting to escape his pursuers. One officer got a grip on the suspect's shirt, but

it ripped and the man dashed out of the store. The police chased him for two blocks, then caught up with him and took him to the ground, but the suspect continued to struggle violently. The two plainclothes officers continued to struggle with the assailant until back-up arrived; they suffered multiple scrapes and bite wounds. When the additional officers arrived, the man was overpowered and taken into custody. After he was medically cleared, he was booked for assaulting a police officer.

Fraud
Webster Street and Geary Boulevard
February 12, 9:54 p.m.
An employee at the Safeway became suspicious when a man had a difficult time producing identification while attempting to cash checks. The employee then called police, who determined the man was carrying multiple phony checks along with a false California ID. The suspect was also in possession of \$2,000, which police believe he obtained illegally. He was charged with fraud and sent to jail.

Narcotics Possession
California Street and Van Ness Avenue
February 13, 4 a.m.
Officers stopped a vehicle with expired registration. When they approached the driver, they noticed a white powder on his shirt and deduced that he had spilled cocaine on himself. A search turned up more cocaine on his person and stashed inside his vehicle. He was arrested and taken to Northern Station.

Prostitution
Van Ness Avenue and California Street
February 20, 2:15 p.m.
Officers driving in the area questioned a woman who appeared to be working as a prostitute. She told officers that she had a California identification card, but had lost it. When she finally provided her true name and birth date, officers realized she was 15 years old and had been reported missing. The young woman was released to her mother, who was summoned to the scene.

Burglary
Van Ness Avenue and Jackson Street
February 21, 4:20 a.m.
Officers received a report that someone had kicked in the door of an apartment building and was possibly still inside. Officers forced the door and entered the common garage area. There they found an individual lying in the back seat of a parked car, and ordered him out. When he refused to cooperate, they forcefully removed him. The officers then found the owner of the car, who did not recognize the detained individual. He was then arrested and charged with breaking into the building.

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NEW NEIGHBOR

Not So Plain Jane Opens to Applause

► FROM PAGE ONE

Citizen Cake arrived to great expectations last fall with star chef Elizabeth Falkner and a high-wattage reputation. Reviews have been positive, but its embrace by the neighborhood has been lukewarm.

Michael maintains that Jane is not in competition with its edgy next-door neighbor.

"Citizen Cake is much more of a destination place," she says, adding that she's encouraged by the proposal to allow Fillmore to add more eateries to make it "a bustling food scene."

The fare at Jane is plain and simple: fresh baked goods, soup, salads, sandwiches and Straus soft serve ice cream.

Michael was pastry chef at PlumpJack, further up Fillmore, before taking time out of the kitchen to raise her two children — 11-year-old daughter Jane and son Gus, who's now 13 and too busy being a teen to mind that his mother's new baby is named after his sister.

After leaving PlumpJack for motherhood, she kept alive the dream of owning her own place. A neighborhood resident for the last 15 years — the family lives around the corner on Sacramento Street — she wanted her new place to be close to home. In fact, she limited her search to the two blocks of Fillmore between California and Clay.

The spot at 2123 Fillmore was a perfect fit for her bill of particulars. She started negotiating with the landlord as soon as the Bittersweet cafe closed suddenly last summer. After the obligatory prolonged battle with the zoning authorities and an extensive renovation, Jane opened at the beginning of February.

"We prettied it up a little," Michael says modestly.

The new decor manages to be both hip and cozy. Upstairs there's a veritable salon with upholstered chairs and tables bearing cheeky sayings. Downstairs tables are clubby, with tall seats lining the coffee bar to allow patrons to keep a close eye on the baristas. That's a fitting focus at Jane, which features beans and brew from favorite local purveyor Four Barrel Coffee.

"Coffee is a big part of what we do," says Michael. "San Francisco is the epicenter of coffee-making as art and we wanted to bring the coffee revolution to this side of town."

Jane is open daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. And while that makes for long hours for Michael — who starts baking everything from scratch on the spot at 4 each morning in her newly remodeled bakers' kitchen — she also hints that Jane may keep later hours in the future.

But Michael says the hard work and long hours are already worth it. "The neighborhood has been fabulous," she says. "People have been just incredibly welcoming and supportive."

One possible reason: An outsized mounted yak head oversees the goings-on from a high perch on one wall.

"Oh — that's Jack the yak," says Michael. "He's our protector."

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AFTER RETIRING as a high school English teacher, Eleanor Burke decided she needed a project to keep busy — and an excuse to explore the city she'd called home all her life.

A few years earlier she had sketched architectural highlights of Russian Hill and published a small guide to the neighborhood. So she decided to expand her horizons and take on the rest of the city. After all, she'd lived in seven of its neighborhoods and knew most of the rest.

Or so she thought.

"I learned how much I didn't know," she says now, awaiting the arrival from the printer of *Sketching San Francisco's Neighborhoods*, her new book, which she says offers "a visual journey through the well-known and not-so-well-known areas of the city."

When Burke started, friends warned her: Don't go to Bayview. Don't go to Visitation Valley.

Have Scooter, Will Travel

Exploring and sketching the city

"That just isn't true," she says. "People are quite friendly to a little lady on her scooter with a camera."

Burke has stories to tell about every corner of the city — and hundreds of drawings of the quirks and oddities and beauties that caught her eye in various neighborhoods.

"They all have their own flavor," she says. "And it is flavor. Go down Third Street and you smell fried chicken. On Potrero, it's beer."

Burke grew up on Jackson Street in Presidio Heights.

"Out of my bedroom window I saw the Presidio and the Golden Gate Bridge," she says. She and her friends played together down the hill at the Julius Kahn Playground with their parents' encouragement.

"Parents worry more now," she says. And yet she pronounces a definitive judgment about the changes that have come to the city during her lifetime: "Things have gotten better — across the board." She hopes her book will "help people get out of their comfort zone."

Sketching San Francisco's Neighborhoods will be available for \$25 this month at Brower Books on Fillmore, Books Inc. in Laurel Village and the Warming Hut at Crissy Field, plus other independent bookstores around the city.

"I want it to be in the neighborhoods," Burke says, "especially the offbeat neighborhoods." She knows where they are.



A neighbor checks out new releases at Brower Books on Fillmore.

■ THE BROWSER | KEN SAMUELS

Will Local Bookstores Gain From the Loss of a Megastore?

A CUSTOMER walks into Brower Books on Fillmore and approaches the counter with a sly smile on his face. "Hey," he says, "are you guys happy that Borders is closing in Union Square?"

"I'm not happy for the people who lost their jobs," I reply, "but it doesn't surprise me."

I tell him I've been following the stories of Borders' financial troubles in the newspapers and in *Publishers Weekly*. Borders was hit hard by the rise of online bookselling and was slow to respond to the challenge. In addition, a megastore in a megaspace like Union Square has a huge overhead that must be crippling in these tough times.

"I understand that," he says, "but does it help you?"

That's an interesting question. It gets to the heart of the challenge that an independent neighborhood bookstore such as Brower faces these days. In our case, the Union Square Borders never had a significant negative impact on us. The residents of our neighborhood — as in most of San Francisco — have been loyal to their local bookstore.

We know our customers by name. We know what they might like to read. I've been having ongoing conversations with them for a decade or more. These sorts of relationships have sustained us through good times and bad and are the bedrock of any

longtime neighborhood business.

But is that enough to keep us going these days? Visiting customers from all over the country have told me how happy they are to be in our store because their neighborhood bookshops are all gone. While that is both sad and gratifying to hear, we face the same threats that all bookstores, large and small, face: online bookselling, the rise of e-books and of course the rough economy of the last few years.

Without question, Brower Books and other neighborhood stores must respond to the latest trends and mediums of acquiring books. But the core of our business remains the personal connection we make with readers.

My colleagues and I love books. We love to read. We are interested in topics that range from Buddhism to cooking to the literature of the Lost Generation to tigers and beyond. Lately I've been reading Chekhov's short stories and the brilliant, funny novels of Charles Portis. But I also love to talk about the latest baseball books, crime fiction, my favorite book on southern soul (*Sweet Soul Music* by Peter Guralnick) and my favorite children's book (*Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson).

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Ken Samuels has worked at Brower Books at 2195 Fillmore since 1996.

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RIGHT: *Fontaine des Medici*, (1630, restored 1855, Jardin du Luxembourg), watercolor, 25.5 x 12.5 inches





Mike Pitre and Bohemian Knuckleboogie will play at Russelas during Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras on Fillmore

You don't have to travel to New Orleans to get the Mardi Gras spirit this year. On Fat Tuesday — March 8 — the Fillmore Jazz District will come alive with music, dancing, face painting, juggling and stillwalking, plus food and drink specials at the clubs and restaurants. The celebration will kick off at 5 p.m. when bluesman Bobbie Webb performs in the Fillmore Center plaza. It continues with the 5th annual masquerade ball — including a costume contest — at the West Bay Conference Center. For more information, go to thefillmoredistrict.com.

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1300 ON FILLMORE

'Good Music for Hard Times'

A band's distinctive sound finds a home in the Fillmore

By ANTHONY TORRES

I FIRST SAW Bohemian Knuckleboogie a little over a year ago at Sheba Piano Lounge in the Fillmore Jazz District. I'd stopped in to get something to eat and to relax in the early evening when I took notice of the unique blend of soul, jazz and blues these guys were laying down. It's hard not to notice when the group is led by Mike Pitre, aka Coffee Picasso, a large black man blowing a tiny pocket trumpet and alternating licks on guitar, who sings with a one-of-a-kind voice that has to be heard to be fully appreciated.

This is not to say that Pitre is a great singer. He's not — at least not in the usual way one might call someone a great vocalist. But what he has is a style that's all his own. And that, in combination with the overall quality and tone of the music, makes the group hip and distinct.

I have seen Bohemian Knuckleboogie a number of times since then — both at Sheba, where the band plays most Sundays, and up the street at Russelas, where they play on Tuesdays. And every time, I'm drawn into what they do. I find myself trying to grapple with the music's nuances and peculiarities, to pin it down and anchor it. But it always seems elusive, probably because of its seeming simplicity combined with a certain underlying complexity.

On Knuckleboogie's website, Pitre describes the music's roots as "from the fever swamps of Port Arthur in the Lone Star State where I started honking my horn as a kid, when I wasn't thinking about pirates."

He also explains how he landed locally: "It was a traveling uncle who told me about the blues and jazz clubs of the Fillmore District in SF back in the day when cats from all over got down. Now the Fillmore's making a comeback and it's the band's home base."

That Pitre will admit to being from "the swamps" is perhaps the best indicator of his band's sound. One of the associations I make when listening to the group is Dr. John, the Night Tripper, and that New Orleans feel — or a sensibility you might on occasion garner from Leon Russell or Tom Waits.

It's in the seemingly simple and understated arrangements, the flirting with playing the trumpet slightly off-tone, and also in Pitre's voice and phrasing that you hear sources of the music that speaks to histories and musical traditions that are deep and profound.

Their sound delivers the uniqueness of Bohemian Knuckleboogie: the combined fusion of Pitre with the tasty chops of Garry Williams on drums, the subtle and beautiful work of Jeff Orchard on the keys and Wendell Rand on bass.

All of that makes for what the band refers to as "good music for hard times."

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By ERICA REIDER

IT'S 7:30 ON A TUESDAY EVENING, and nearly every seat in Dino's Pizza at the corner of Fillmore and California is taken. Couples and families crowd the tables, sharing pizzas, draft beers and sodas. Three television screens broadcast the Tennessee-Vanderbilt basketball game, while mob movie stills and portraits of famous athletes stare out from the walls.

But the newest decoration hangs from the balcony. It's a blue blanket that proclaims: "BABY BOY."

Owner Dino Stavrikakis struts among the diners, his photo-loaded iPhone at the ready. Customers gush over pictures of the month-old baby named Santino, while the proud father regales them with tales from the crib.

"I really love talking about this story," says Dino, who's on a first name basis with nearly everyone in the neighborhood. "I talk about it 10 times a day."

Santino Vasil Stavrikakis was born on January 22. But the story began a year and a half ago, when the 50-year-old bachelor set his sights on becoming a father. "There wasn't one specific day that it hit me and I said, 'Okay, this is what I need to do,'" says Dino. "It was just at this point in my life — you know, you get a little older."

When the idea of having a son took root, he turned to his customers for advice. "I don't know what anyone does for a living, but everyone does something," he says. "So I was kind of throwing out words here and there, and hoping someone would hear me and say, 'This is where you need to go.'"

That moment occurred in August 2009 when friends of Dr. Carl Herbert, a fertility specialist and president of the Pacific Fertility Center, came to Dino's for dinner. "I started talking about it," Dino recalls. "They all just stopped eating and said, 'We have the guy for you.'"

Dino admits he hadn't envisioned using fertility technology. "I didn't imagine this three years ago," he says. "I mean, who knew about any of this stuff?" But living in San Francisco opened his eyes to new possibilities: "I saw a lot of gay couples doing this, and I said, 'This is great!'"

The six-figure price tag was not a deterrent. "I figured I was blessed enough to be able to afford the process," he says. "And which would I rather have: my son or a Ferrari? I'll take my son over the car."

Still, Dino admits he had a steep learning curve. "I didn't know what a surrogate was, I didn't know what an egg donor was," he says. "I just kind of knew something about the process."

And the options seemed overwhelming. He had to choose both an egg donor and a surrogate mother. "They do that for two reasons," he says. "One is for legality, and one is for genetics. Because if the egg donor carries she could change her mind — and then you have a whole nightmare."

The clinic suggested possible donor agencies and Dino researched each one, finally deciding on an agency that worked with both egg donors and carriers.

One choice took no deliberation. "I wanted a boy," he says. And he wasn't going to leave that up to chance. "It's called spinning the sperm," he says, and involves a centrifuge that separates X and Y sperm in a lab. "You pay extra for that," he notes.

But other variables would prove beyond his control.

TO PAGE 10 ►

Dino's Boy

Some guys get a Ferrari for their 50th.
He got a son.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE MALLER

'He's Not My Son. I'm His Father.'

► FROM PAGE 9

"In January of 2010, within three days my egg donor and carrier fell apart," says Dino. "I had to start the process all over, start the finances all over. But not once did I think it wasn't going to happen."

After losing two egg donors to failed tests, Dino met his best match yet. "Once I met her, I knew she was the right one," he says of his third, and actual, egg donor.

A combination of factors won him over. "I chose both the egg donor and carrier based on personality and looks," he says. "They had baby pictures of themselves, so you look at genetics, you look at this, you look at that."

Searching for a surrogate mother, Dino found the winning combination in a Southern California woman named Dusty Kenney. "We clicked right away," he says.

Kenney agrees. "I feel really blessed that we found each other because we have such a good connection," she says.

Kenney has a daughter of her own, but she too was new to the world of surrogate pregnancies. "It had never occurred to me that people were surrogates for other people," she says. Then she came across the possibility online. "As soon as I saw it, I knew I had to do it. I just thought what a cool thing to be able to do."

She and Dino kept in close contact

throughout her pregnancy, which resulted from the implantation of the donor's egg fertilized by his sperm. "He would call and check on me probably every other day," she says. "He would fly down all the time and hang out and he would cook me dinner. He was supportive through the whole process."

Dino had planned to visit more often as Santino's February 23 due date approached. "I was going to fly down there on the 15th of February and check into a hotel and just wait it out," he says.



Want to see some baby pictures? Proud papa Dino Stavrikis just happens to have them — and he's happy to share.

But as it happened, everyone was caught off guard when Santino arrived a month early.

"I got the phone call on the 22nd at 5 in the morning," Dino recalls. He was there when Santino made his appearance that afternoon at 5:18 at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Beverly Hills.

It completely changed Dino's life. A man who says he had "never lived with anybody" acquired not one but two new roommates: his baby son and a live-in nanny. "She's phenomenal," he says of the nanny. "We've

really gotten along, and we're making it work."

They weren't so sure a month ago when Dino and the nanny brought Santino up from Los Angeles. Dino says he got home at 6 o'clock on Thursday night, "he recalls, and we just looked at each other like, 'Now what?' It forced us to get into fifth gear right away."

Santino's temperament makes things easier. "He's really patient," says Dino. "He's a good sport."



His surrogate mother agrees. "He just has such a calm, sweet personality," says Kenney. "He doesn't cry unless he's hungry." She has visited Dino and Santino since the birth, and expects to continue to make regular visits. "I imagine I'll see them once a month," she says.

Dino has given considerable thought to Kenney's future relationship to Santino. "I tried to figure out a Greek name for her," he says. "Zoila means the giver of life. When Santino gets a little bigger, he's going to call her that."

Kenney also has thought ahead. "I would imagine it would be like the role of an aunt," she says. "I just want to be there for him. I think the more fans a child has when growing up the better."

The egg donor has yet to meet Santino, but Dino expects that she will. "She lives in Florida, but she wanted to be involved as much as she could," he says. "I told her, 'Whenever you want you just fly out — whenever you feel ready to do it.'"

In the meantime, Santino gets plenty of attention. "Every day he gets two or three

presents from around the world," says Dino. "Everybody comes in and asks for him. It's turned out, he's not my son; I'm his father."

Even those surprised by the news have been supportive. "I've got people that have known me for a long time that thought I was the biggest flirt of all time, the biggest flirt," he explains. "They say, 'Dino, you committed to something!'"

And the story may have ripple effects. "I had two guys come up and tell me that their girlfriends are using me as an example for them to get married: 'If Dino can commit, how come you can't commit?'"

Those who have yet to meet Santino will have ample opportunity when they stop by for pizza. "I want to bring him more and more and more," Dino says. "But he's got to get a little bigger."

Until then, a message painted on the restaurant windows announces to customers and passersby alike: "Santino has arrived." Dino calls it a low-tech birth announcement. "I don't know how to send an Internet whatever," he says. "So the best way for me is to do

everything like I've done and just put it in the window."

Dino says he plans to take down the signs after Santino's 40-day blessing, a Greek Orthodox rite that will take place in early March. And he's already dreaming of Santino's future. "He'll definitely be working at Dino's when he's really young," says Dino, "just kind of walking around and helping me out."

For now, father and son see each other mainly outside of the restaurant. "I have to work," says Dino, "but my schedule's really flexible."

The two have already created some memorable moments. "On Saturday, we hung out and watched *The Godfather*," Dino says. In the film, Santino is the first-born son of New York Mafia boss Vito Corleone — and the name, which means "little saint" in Italian, stuck with Dino when he first saw *The Godfather* 35 years ago.

"Dino means 'the sword,'" says Dino. "So it's the sword and the little saint, which to me means we're basically watching each other's back."

■ A GRANDMOTHER'S VIEW

First: 'I was speechless.' Then: 'I will embrace it.'

Like mothers everywhere, Dino's mother, Koula McCormick, acknowledges two primal yearnings: wanting her child to be happy — and wanting a grandchild to properly spoil. So when both things happened — albeit in a somewhat unconventional way — she says she welcomed them with an open mind and an open heart. She recounts how she learned she at last was going to become a grandmother.

Every mother wants her children to get married and have children. That's what life is all about. So I wanted the same thing as a mother — and the years went by. But it's something you don't press. Some things have to come from the heart.

One day about a year and a half ago, Dino said, "Mom, I want to talk to you." We have been very close. I went over and we had lunch.

He said, "Mom, I decided to do something, and I hope that you accept it and embrace it."

So then he told me: "I'm going to proceed to have a baby the surrogate way."

I was speechless. I thought for a minute and for a second, and I responded to him, "Whatever you decide is better for you, I love you, and I will embrace it."

He said, "Mom, I want you to know one thing: I will be a good father, and I will raise my son the way you raised me."

What more can a mother want to hear? I want to see my son put his arms around a woman and be happy. But he's so happy with his son, it has made a different life for him. He adores the baby.

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Tinkering With Time

David Smith is fascinated by clocks, and he knows what makes them tick

By ANNE PAPROCKI | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK ANDERSON

PEEK INTO the windows of Smith Clock Co. — tucked away at the corner of Bush and Baker Streets — reveals dozens of grandfather clocks, ticking away, a reminder of an earlier time. They look as if they belong in a museum. All are lovingly tended by David Smith, the shop's owner, who has been restoring and repairing clocks since 1975.

"There's so much to be fascinated by in clocks," says Smith, who's had his own shop in the neighborhood for the past 16 years, first on Fillmore Street and now at 2799 Bush. "From the well-built grandfather clocks of the 1600s to the tubular chimes of the 1800s, they're all so different," he says while painstakingly inserting a musical unit into a broken German cuckoo clock.

Smith sells grandfather clocks in the store's front room, repairs antique clocks for dealers in the back and carefully tends to the heirlooms brought in by neighborhood residents.

The store contains wooden clocks of all shapes and sizes. It also houses Smith's workshop, where tools and clock parts rest on every available surface.

He was fascinated by clocks from an early age. As a boy, Smith often helped his father, a San Francisco real estate agent, clean properties before they went on the market.

"People left all kinds of stuff behind," he says. "When I was 10, I found my first clock. I opened it up and tried to figure out how it worked."

His parents encouraged his curiosity about clocks, especially because it kept him away from more dangerous things.

As he grew older, Smith's love of tinkering with clocks stayed with him. He was an amateur expert and collector by 1975, when he got a job at a furniture store in Daly City setting up and servicing customers' clocks. By 1980, he was ready to learn more. He enrolled in a two-year clock and watch repair program in San Francisco, and later apprenticed with two local clock repair shops.

He's especially interested in the insides of the timepieces: the gears and wheels that control the lunar calendars, chimes and melodies found in clocks sometimes centuries old.

Clocks currently in the shop include an English grandfather clock from the 1800s with a lunar dial and a seven foot tall grandfather clock with an ornate Asian image above the face. But Smith says he cannot single out one clock as a favorite.

"My favorite is usually whichever clock I'm working on," he says.

Today his customers — many of them decorators and antique dealers — come from the neighborhood and from many miles around. "I'm about the only shop like this left in San Francisco," he says.

Smith says the clock business has changed — not just because of the economy, which has affected the antique market, but also because many dealers have moved online.

"Before there were more local people,"



"I'm about the only shop like this left in San Francisco."

— DAVID SMITH, owner of Smith Clock Co.

he says. "We would meet and you could see everything. Now it's all from websites."

Smith, too, is adapting, and has recently launched his own website. He plans to add an online database with photos and clock descriptions at smithclockco.com. Even as he moves online, he worries about shipping such valuable material — and misses the camaraderie of meeting face to face with collectors and dealers.

In addition to repairing clocks, Smith also dispenses clock advice and has more than 40 clocks for sale in his shop. He's also careful to make sure a clock will fit with a house's style and size.

"Victorians in San Francisco have smaller rooms," he says. "So you want a clock with less depth than something you might get away with down the Peninsula."

Even though the clocks Smith repairs include models from the 1700s worth tens of thousands of dollars, he says he's just as excited to help people repair the clock they grew up hearing chime on the hour.

"It's not just about Antiques Roadshow," he says. "There's a sentimental reason many people repair clocks."

And that seems to be one thing that's only getting stronger over time. Smith says several customers have asked him to repair clocks for their aging parents, who find the familiar sound of the family grandfather clock or cuckoo clock a great comfort.

"People can get attached to clocks," he says. "They take care of their families, their pets — and then their clocks."

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1701 Gough St	4	3	3	3500	12/7/11	2,125,000	2,250,000
1 Spruce St	4	3	2	2914	2/2/11	2,995,000	2,900,000
3157 Steiner St	5	4.5	2		2/8/11	3,299,000	3,160,000
3501 Clay St	6	4.5	2	6018	12/1/11	5,750,000	5,575,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts

2701 Van Ness Ave #206	0	1	1	528	2/1/11	175,000	175,000
1450 Post St #501	1	1	1	718	1/31/11	370,000	370,000
1805 Fillmore St #205	1	1	1		2/4/11	469,000	476,000
1775 Broadway #8	1	1	0	728	1/28/11	479,000	479,000
1880 Steiner St #209	2	2	1	983	2/1/11	729,000	711,500
2447 Vallejo St #6	1	1	0	1314	12/1/11	749,000	749,000
1966 Pacific Ave #304	2	2	1	1115	1/20/11	778,000	757,000
2111 Franklin St #4	2	2	1	1565	2/2/11	725,000	815,000
3320 California St #1	2	2	1	1257	2/1/11	959,000	928,000
3234 Washington St #5	4	4	2	2500	2/8/11	1,100,000	1,030,000
1644 Union St	2	2	1	1548	2/4/11	1,249,000	1,250,000
3025 Broderick St	2	2.5	2	1730	2/3/11	1,275,000	1,290,000
2041 Sacramento St	3	3	2	2503	1/26/11	1,499,000	1,418,000
1662 Union St	3	3	1	2503	2/4/11	1,599,000	1,600,000
2052 Green St #2	3	3	1	2224	2/4/11	1,695,000	1,637,320
3328 Washington St	3	2	1	2080	1/28/11	1,995,000	1,850,000

Cash is king, and spring is in the air



Spring selling season is in full swing, and buyers are taking advantage of attractive prices and continued historically low interest rates. Pent-up buyer demand is apparent in the increasing number of neighborhood properties that closed or went into contract during the last month, many within their first few days on the market. And even though interest rates are still attractive, cash was king in at least six of the transactions, including three of the highest priced single family homes.

One example is 3157 Steiner Street, which sat on the market for 210 days last year. It resurfaced at the same list price in mid-January. With the momentum of the spring season, an all-cash buyer closed in less than a month. Another all-cash buyer — a local psychiatrist — bought 1701 Gough Street, a

William Hollis Victorian on a prominent corner at Pine Street. And 3501 Clay Street, the Presidio Heights home and Thomas Church garden of a prominent local plastic surgeon, also sold to an all-cash buyer after only 24 days on the market.

NEW LISTINGS — AND SALES: A number of new listings hit the market during the last month, and a majority went into contract quickly (although the sales have not yet closed, and are not listed on the chart above). For example, 3659 Washington, a 6,163 sq. ft. Presidio Heights home remodeled with many "green" features, hit the market for \$7 million and immediately attracted two offers. Same story at 1855 Laguna, an Italianate Victorian listed just under \$2.2 million on the prime block between Bush and Pine (above), which went into contract within two weeks. A 1,164 sq. ft. 1-bedroom Edwardian condo, 1855 Sacramento Street #1, garnered three offers and went into contract 22 days after coming on the market. New listings still available include 2745 Laguna, a 1,719 sq. ft. 3-bedroom, 2-bath Victorian condo for just under \$1.3 million.

— Data and commentary provided by VICTORIA STEWART DAVIS at Pacific Union. Contact her at vdavis@pacunion.com or call 345-3760.

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ORNITHOLOGY



Thriving in the neighborhood

When I saw a golden crowned hummingbird up at Alta Plaza Park near the tennis courts, I was confused. I was unaware of any species that sports a golden crown. But then I watched as she dipped her bill into the long red tubular-shaped flowers adorning the bushes and witnessed the way the stamen pressed down on her head as she sipped nectar from the bottom of the flower. That was pollen on her head! It would travel with her to another flower, completing the plant's sex act. I waited till she landed and took the shot at left. She's actually a female Anna's Hummingbird, the species that stays in San Francisco all year. Above is a male Anna's I photographed at Lafayette Park last April. Note the vermillion, iridescent head. These little guys are amazing creatures, on so many levels, and they thrive right here in the neighborhood. — MONTE TRAVIS

HAIL & FAREWELL



Longtime Webster Street resident **John Schmiedel** — passionate connoisseur of food and wine, patron of the arts and animal welfare causes, accomplished architect and dedicated preservationist of his native San Francisco — died peacefully on February 4, 2011, at the age of 72.

For years, John could be seen most afternoons taking one of his beloved cats for a walk on a leash in the neighborhood. He maintained many close friendships from his student days at St. Ignatius and UC Berkeley. He loved exploring and traveling in Mexico. Survivors include his wife of 44 years, Charlotte; his sister Mary; several nieces and nephews and many loving friends.

Donations in his memory may be made to San Francisco Architectural Heritage.

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2455 California 929-9030

Dosa
1700 Fillmore 441-3672

Elite Cafe
2049 Fillmore 346-8668

Florio
1915 Fillmore 775-4300

Fresca Peruvian Cuisine
2114 Fillmore 447-2768

The Grove
2016 Fillmore 474-1419

India Palace
1740 Fillmore 567-7789

Jackson Fillmore Trattoria
2506 Fillmore 346-5288

Jane
2123 Fillmore 931-5263

Johnny Rockets
1946 Fillmore 776-9878

La Boulange
2043 Fillmore 928-1300

La Mediterranee
2210 Fillmore 921-2956

Mehfil Indian Cuisine
2301 Fillmore 614-1010

Osaka
1923 Fillmore 346-6788

Out the Door
2232 Bush 923-9575

Pride of the Mediterranean
1761 Fillmore 567-1150

Sweet Lime
2100 Sutter 674-7515

Sweet Maple
2101 Sutter 855-9169

Tacobar
2401 California 674-7745

Ten-ichi
2235 Fillmore 346-3477

Thai Stick
2001 Fillmore 885-6100

Via Veneto
2244 Fillmore 346-9211

Woodhouse Fish Co.
1914 Fillmore 437-2722

Yoshi's Japanese Restaurant
1330 Fillmore 655-5600

PIZZA

Bruno's
1375 Fillmore 563-6300

Delfina Pizzeria
2406 California 440-1189

Dino's Pizza
2101 Fillmore 922-4700

Extreme Pizza
1732 Fillmore 929-9900

Pizza Inferno
1800 Fillmore 775-1800

BAKERY & DESSERTS

Boulangerie Bay Bread
2325 Pine 440-0356

Fillmore Bakeshop
1890 Fillmore 923-0711

Noah's New York Bagels
2213 Fillmore 441-5396

COFFEE

Cafe Murano
1777 Steiner 771-0888

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
2201 Fillmore 443-9733

Peet's Coffee & Tea
2197 Fillmore 563-9930

Royal Ground Coffee
2050 Fillmore 567-8822

Starbucks Coffee
2222 Fillmore 673-3171

Tully's Coffee
2455 Fillmore 929-8808

WINE & SPIRITS

D&M Wine and Liquor
2200 Fillmore 346-1325

Vino
2425 California 674-8466

Wine Jar
1870 Fillmore 931-2924

MARKETS

Fillmore Fine Foods
1981 Sutter 563-0190

Friends
1758 Fillmore 346-3226

Gino's Grocery
2500 Fillmore 775-1908

Mayflower Market
2496 Fillmore 346-1700

Mollie Stone's
2435 California 567-4902

Pacific Food Mart
2199 Sutter 614-2385

ENTERTAINMENT

Boom Boom Room
1601 Fillmore 673-8000

Clay Theater
2261 Fillmore 352-0810

The Fillmore Auditorium
1805 Geary 346-3000

Harry's Bar
2020 Fillmore 921-1000

Rasselas Jazz Club
1534 Fillmore 346-8696

Sheba Piano Lounge
1419 Fillmore 440-7414

Sundance Kabuki Theaters
1881 Post 931-9800

Yoshi's Jazz Club
1330 Fillmore 655-5600



Not many cities can boast a vibrant section of town that is upscale but approachable, fashionable but not elitist, comfortable without being boring. San Francisco's Fillmore is all these — and, best of all, it's not striving to be original. It just is. — *Gourmet magazine*

www.FillmoreStreetsf.com

