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# THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ SEPTEMBER 2013



## A prophet of doom

Photograph from the CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jim Jones moved his Peoples Temple into the Fillmore at its most vulnerable moment, just as redevelopment had "literally destroyed the neighborhood," said neighborhood activist Hannibal Williams. "People were desperate for solutions, something to follow. Jim Jones was another solution. He had a charismatic personality that won the hearts and souls of people. And people followed him to hell. That's where Jim Jones went. That's where he took the people who followed him."

STORY | PAGES 8-10

## New Limits Proposed for Chain Stores on Fillmore

Bill would restrict spinoffs and international brands

**A**S FILLMORE STREET continues to rapidly remake itself into a mecca for fashion labels from around the world, supplanting basic neighborhood services, legislation has now been introduced at City Hall that would subject more of them to the city's limits on chain stores.

Under the existing "formula retail" ordinance — enacted by the voters in 2008 to limit the proliferation of chain stores in the city's neighborhoods — businesses must obtain a conditional use permit to open on upper Fillmore if they have 11 or more stores in the U.S.

New legislation introduced by District 2 Supervisor Mark Farrell would amend the ordinance to include stores located not only in the U.S., but anywhere in the world. That would affect companies that have numerous stores in other countries, but are just beginning to establish a presence in the U.S.

"After hearing from both our merchants and neighbors in the Upper Fillmore about concerns that large retailers were pushing out our smaller and unique 'mom and pop' type of stores," Farrell said, "I introduced legislation to expand the definition of formula retail."

The legislation would also extend the law to include new businesses started by formula retail companies, whether or not they currently have 11 or more stores. This has been an approach favored by companies such as the Gap, which opened Athleta on Fillmore, and Starbucks, which opened Evolution Fresh.

Farrell's proposal would apply only to the Upper Fillmore Neighborhood Commercial District, which extends from Bush to Jackson streets.

Similar efforts have been launched in other neighborhoods, including nearby Hayes Street. In response, the Planning Department has resisted neighborhood-specific legislation and instead proposed that the proposals be delayed while a study is conducted to develop uniform rules.

Farrell's legislative assistant Catherine Stefani said her office would press forward with the legislation despite the Planning Department's move for a citywide law.

"We have told Planning that we plan to proceed with the legislation despite the study because we felt that it was urgent to do so," Stefani said.

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18th & Collingwood in the Castro California & Steiner in the Fillmore

### FIRST PERSON

## Languages

At the convalescent center  
I learn scraps of languages I once knew —  
Spanish, Chinese and Tagalog  
Scraps of Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Armenian  
And languages nobody knows  
Like Tigrinya and Yemeni and Ibo —

They've all come to change diapers and clean toilets  
In the most expensive city in America  
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None of them can identify  
The selections on our menu  
Can't tell spaghetti from lasagna  
Or pizza from ravioli

Twenty years working double shifts  
In multiple hospitals and retirement homes  
None of them ever had money  
To go to one of our fabulous restaurants  
Or enjoy the pleasure  
Of a sit-down meal by candlelight

So we scream at them for their rudeness  
Incompetence!  
"Were you born in a barn?"  
Probably, yes.

There are terrifying blasts —  
The language of the dead, dying and demented —  
An overgrown boy from Saigon  
With the body of a worn-out weightlifter  
Who screams as if recalling the horrors  
Of napalm and tiger cages  
Or is he just lonely with no one to talk to?

There is the lady of 90 from the Strait of Hormuz  
Who still wizened and spry  
Screams in her sleep  
"I don't know you!"  
"I don't want nobody!"

The alarm goes off, shatters our sleep  
When she tries to walk across the deep  
Did she marry an Iranian  
Whose family no longer wants to know her?  
Or is she a lost Parsee  
Speaking rainy day Farsi?  
I don't know, but every parsec  
She bellows like bloody heck  
And I retreat to my study of  
The sixteen living Filipino dialects  
And curl up to sleep.

— D. M. STROUD

*D. M. Stroud is a resident of one of the nursing homes in the neighborhood.*

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Published on the first weekend of each month. Deadline: 20th of prior month  
Subscriptions by mail are available for \$30 per year. Please send a check.

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### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



The lines at the Clay stretched around the corner and down the block for "Blue Jasmine."

## Woody Allen Packs the Clay

AUGUST WAS a big month for Fillmore Street's venerable Clay Theatre, which hosted the San Francisco premiere of Woody Allen's latest film, *Blue Jasmine*.

Set mostly in San Francisco and filmed partly in Pacific Heights, the film proved to be a powerful draw, with long lines stretching in both directions from the theater's box office.

The boom at the box office turned out to be a boon for many other businesses, especially nearby restaurants.

"Moviegoers!" said owner Massimo Lavano as he surveyed a full dining room at Via Veneto, his Italian restaurant just

across the street from the Clay. "Woody Allen has been great for business."

Down the block at La Mediterranee, servers also reported a big uptick in business. It was the same story at Brower Books, where sales clerks reported that the aisles were far busier than usual with film buffs who stopped by on their way to or from the Clay.

The Clay has more treats coming. This month the theater will expand its midnight movie offerings, screening additional films along with perennial favorite *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. For more information on showtimes and titles, visit [landmarktheatres.com](http://landmarktheatres.com).

## Pioneering Club in the Fillmore Jazz District Closes

Rasselas — the first to open — calls it quits as owner decries a lack of city support; new dance club taking over

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, was last call for Rasselas Jazz Club and Ethiopian Restaurant at 1534 Fillmore Street. Owner Agonafer Shiferaw parted with some 500 friends, fans and neighbors who packed his place for a final night of live music amid cheers, tears, hot horns and cool riffs, all lubricated with free wine.

Rasselas had a 28-year run that began on the corner of California and Divisadero — a property he still owns — and moved to Fillmore Street in 1999.

Before closing, Shiferaw delivered a long and heartfelt letter to Mayor Ed Lee recapping the city's role in the neighborhood and lamenting that the grand plans for the Fillmore Jazz District have not been realized.

"The closing of Rasselas represents more than just the ending of another business venture in the commercially competitive atmosphere of San Francisco," Shiferaw wrote, adding that he was "saddened that the visionary promise of a revitalized, thriving, African American commercial presence along Fillmore Street with a jazz ambience is fading, and fading fast."

In his letter, Shiferaw recounted former Mayor Frank Jordan's establishment of the Fillmore/Western Addition Economic Development Task Force in the early 1990s, which was charged to work with the Redevelopment Agency "to devise a program to salvage some semblance of a commercial life for African American businesses in the Fillmore corridor (Fillmore from Geary Boulevard to Turk Street)."

As part of that effort, Shiferaw said the Redevelopment Agency persuaded him to relocate Rasselas from 2801 California Street to become a centerpiece of a new jazz district on Fillmore.

"For several years mine was the lone commercial establishment in the Jazz Preservation District," he wrote. "From the outset, the enthusiasm, support and encouragement from the task force was not matched by some key Redevelopment Agency staff. Many times, I felt as if certain agency staff wanted me to fail."



*"The visionary promise of a revitalized, thriving, African American commercial presence with a jazz ambience is fading, and fading fast."*

— AGONAFAER SHIFERAW  
owner of Rasselas

He added: "Once I opened Rasselas there was, in my opinion, a demonstrable lack of energy and interest by the agency staff to follow through on important policies and programs that were essential for the success of the Jazz Preservation District as well as my own business."

Shiferaw said the Redevelopment Agency failed to deliver on its promise to provide creative "financing sources" and "financing methods."

"At present, there are just a few African American enterprises along Fillmore Street," Shiferaw wrote. "I urge you, Mr. Mayor, to harness the considerable powers and persuasive authority of your office to assist these businesses to survive on Fillmore Street, and I further urge that you

initiate a revisit of the originating ideas that launched the Jazz Preservation District concept to determine what can be done to salvage this noble endeavor."

Shiferaw does not leave empty-handed. In July 2004 he bought the building Rasselas occupied — even though the Redevelopment Agency staff "frustrated my aspiration for ownership," he wrote the mayor — and has leased it to new operators for five years.

Little is known about the intentions of the new leaseholders, who currently operate a venture called the Grand Nightclub on Fourth Street in the South of Market neighborhood.

The new operators did not respond to repeated inquiries seeking information about their plans. But if their existing nightclub in SOMA is any indication, it will be a dance club with DJs and will bring a different vibe and clubgoer to the Fillmore.

Promotional prose on the website for the SOMA location boasts: "Expect mind-blowing lighting visuals, strobe flashes, sound effects, cryogenics, all controlled behind our custom-designed DJ platform. Our magnificent Grand LED ball consisting of 30,000 individual lights will leave you jaw dropped."

Many people who turned out for the final Saturday night at Rasselas were melancholy.

"I'm sad to see it go," said Karen Babbitt, one of the key supporters behind the Saturday morning Fillmore Farmers Market. "It was an important gathering place — not just for jazz, but as a gathering place for the community."

Nigel Henry, from Oakland, said Rasselas' shutdown means "losing a community landmark, an end of an era." Rasselas frequenter Mildred Thompson said: "San Francisco symbolizes a diversity of culture. Tonight, we are losing some of our diversity."

And San Franciscan Sandi Largo said, "Rasselas is about openness, humanity, the variety of people, of music, of bands. I'm just sorry to see it go."



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## CRIME WATCH

### Street Robbery

Van Ness Avenue and Bush Street  
July 23, 7:34 a.m.

A woman called the police to report her phone had been snatched from her hand. The thief then jumped onto a bicycle and fled. The victim gave a description of his clothing and direction of travel. Using the GPS tracking system on the phone, officers quickly located the suspect. The woman identified the suspect and he was booked at Northern Station.

### Aggravated Assault, Street Robbery

Van Ness Avenue and Ellis Street  
July 23, 8:40 p.m.

A man was walking down the sidewalk taking pictures of buildings when an individual ran toward him, yelling obscenities and shouting that he had "taken an illegal picture." The man tried to get away, but the suspect pursued him. Then he shouted, "We need to rid the world of people like you," while lunging at the man with the camera and striking him in the head with a bag that contained something heavy. The two struggled, and the attacker took the other man's cell phone. A witness called police.

Passersby pinned the assailant to the ground and held him until the police arrived and handcuffed him. Officers found nails and other hard metal objects inside the bag the suspect had used as a weapon. He was booked at Northern Station.

### Vehicle Burglary,

Possession of Stolen Property

Geary Boulevard and Webster Street  
July 24, 7:34 p.m.

Dispatch reported an auto burglary in progress. Arriving officers spotted a man matching the description given, but he

fled. They found him a short time later and detained him. A witness stated that he had watched while the suspect peered into parked vehicles, then punched in the window of one car, reached inside and removed a bag. A computer check revealed the suspect is on probation for auto burglary. He was booked at Northern Station.

### Burglary of Building Under Construction

Van Ness and Pacific Avenues  
July 28, 1:50 a.m.

A building manager looked into the interior of a building under construction and saw light from a flashlight faintly illuminating the interior. He knew no one was supposed to be inside, so he called the police while continuing to watch the building. Eventually the intruder exited through a broken side window, carrying a large garbage bag. The caller gave a good description and officers detained the individual. When they searched him they found construction materials and several power tools. The man told the police he had just woken up and found the tools at his feet, but didn't know where they had come from. He was transported to Northern Station.

### Theft from a Person

Van Ness Avenue and Ellis Street  
August 1, 5:45 p.m.

Officers received a call concerning a man who was chasing another man shouting, "He stole my phone!" Eventually officers at the Tenderloin Station detained the man who was fleeing. The man in pursuit stated that he had been riding the bus while talking on his phone. When the bus came to a stop, someone grabbed his phone and jumped out the rear exit. He chased the man until the police caught up with him.

Officers viewed the video from the bus and were certain they detained the right person. The stolen phone was never located. The suspect was booked at Northern Station.

### Street Robbery

Bush and Divisadero Streets  
August 17, 11:30 p.m.

A woman was walking with a friend while checking her cell phone for directions when the two were approached by a man who pulled up his sweatshirt to show them a gun in his waistband. He told the woman to give him her phone. She complied and the man fled south on Divisadero Street. The woman described the suspect as a black male from 20 to 25 years of age, wearing blue jeans and a black hooded sweatshirt. The suspects were not immediately found.

### Street Robbery

California and Scott Streets  
August 18, 12:40 a.m.

A man was walking on Scott Street when he noticed that two men seemed to be watching him from the opposite side of the street. The two then crossed the street. One suspect stayed in front of the man while the other got behind him. One suspect pulled out a handgun and demanded the man's cell phone. He handed it over. The two men then fled east on California Street. The man who had been robbed described one suspect as a black male wearing a dark jacket and black pants; the second was a Hispanic male from 20 to 22 years of age wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and black pants. The suspects were not immediately found.

### Robbery

Broderick and Bush Streets  
August 18, 4:35 p.m.

Four friends were taking pictures of

each other when two men approached them. One was smiling, so the four decided to ask him to take a photo of them. But then the second man suddenly seized one of the women from behind and pointed a handgun at the four, saying, "This is no joke." He demanded all their cell phones. One suspect grabbed one of the women's phones while the rest handed theirs over. The men then fled east on Pine Street. The robbery victims described one suspect as a Hispanic male of about 25 years of age, wearing a black pea coat and a white baseball cap with a black brim. The second suspect was a black male of 26 years who had a buzz cut and was wearing a dark coat and dark jeans. The suspects were not immediately located.

### Theft

Sutter and Divisadero Streets  
August 19, 5:30 p.m.

A woman who was waiting for a ride put her purse down on a bench alongside her shopping bag. She was standing with her back to the bench when she suddenly realized her purse was no longer there. She looked down the street and saw a man running with her purse in his hands. She shouted for help. A woman who had been sitting in her car jumped out, ran after the suspect and grabbed him. When a man arrived on the scene, she thought he was another witness to the incident coming to help her, but it soon became apparent he was the robber's accomplice. She backed away. Shortly afterward, several security guards from the nearby medical center came forward to help. The alleged purse thief threatened to kill the security guards, but they managed to detain both suspects until the police arrived. Both suspects were charged with theft.

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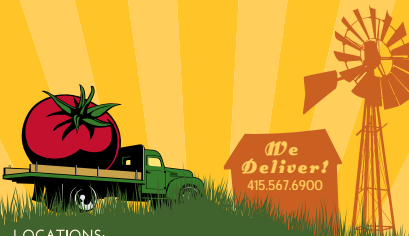
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## NEW NEIGHBOR

# Another Taste of France Comes to the Street

ADDING STILL MORE French flavor to the street, the storefront at 2033 Fillmore that formerly housed Hlaska has been taken over by Sandro, a France-based brand of clothing and accessories for men and women.

The revamped space has a modern look, with floors of repurposed wood in a herringbone pattern. The shotgun shape of the shop has been simply outfitted with racks that run the length of the deep but narrow space: women's clothing on the right, men's on the left.

Store manager Alex Glick describes Sandro's offerings as "very modern Parisian chic," and extols the line's craftsmanship and attention to detail.

The fall line now stocked in the new boutique is heavy on black, with bursts of bright blue and purple. But it's the fabrics that set it apart.

"As a company we source great mills, some the same as Balenciaga uses," says sales associate Amury Perez. Most Sandro designs are fashioned of European fabrics from France, Spain and Italy.

Perez says that so far, local customers and browsers have been taken with the high quality of the goods offered. He points to women's blouses in complicated textiles for \$200 to \$350.

Products geared specifically to the Fillmore shopper include coats and moto jackets, wearable year-round in our climate. Currently in stock and serving as a good example: a quilted sweater for men in deep navy, priced at \$365.

The Sandro line was launched in 1984 with a boutique in the Marais district of



Sandro has more than 200 stores worldwide, but its newest, on Fillmore, is only the sixth in the U.S.

Paris. It has been available locally at Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's and boasts more than 200 boutiques worldwide. The Fillmore locale is the first freestanding boutique on the west coast and the sixth shop in the U.S., allowing it to open on the street without being subject to the 11-stores-in-the-U.S. chain store limit.

But this is only the beginning. Another Sandro store is slated to open in Los Angeles in October. And Glick notes the company has grand plans for growth.

"We're looking to expand soon into Boston, Chicago — all the major cities all throughout the country," he says.

## STREET TALK

### Design Within Reach no longer within reach

The number of home stores on Fillmore Street continues to decline, and the number of clothing stores continues to climb. At the end of August, the mid-century modern outpost **Design Within Reach** closed its doors at 1913 Fillmore as part of a consolidation of operations in the design center. A number of fashion labels battled over the space, including Trina Turk and the Kate Spade empire. Both lost out to **Ella Moss**, a label well known in department stores, which will open its own boutique on Fillmore.

**MORE FASHION:** The independent sportswear maker **Clary Sage** packed up its bags and closed its store at 2241 Fillmore in August. Several fashion labels are said to be eyeing the space, but are balking at their inability to redesign the facade. . . . Down the block at 2130 Fillmore, the German chain **Osk** lost its bid to open a store under its own name, but instead will open as **2130** and carry Osk and other brands. The makeover is nearly complete.

**NOTHING'S \$1.25:** Farther south at 1633 Fillmore, the **National Dollar** store, where everything was \$1.25, has pulled the plug and the space is for lease. . . . Off the beaten path on Sutter Street, near Pierce, **Timeless Treasures** and **Sidney Salon** are losing their homes temporarily while the building is expanded and retrofitted. TT will take a break after selling off its inventory in a big sale; Sidney will move down the street to share space at **Winfred's Salon** at 1967 Sutter. . . . Nearby at 1981 Sutter, the **Fillmore Fine Foods** cafe has called it quits.

## ABROAD



# Lunch on the Bosphorus

Catching up with the owner of Fillmore's Troya on a visit back home to Turkey

By DAN MAX

FOR 20 YEARS I've been making regular trips to Turkey from my flat above Fillmore Street. During a month-long visit to Istanbul this summer, I experienced a perfect afternoon when I met up with Berk Kinalilar, the owner of the neighborhood's Troya restaurant and a native Turk.

Troya, at 2125 Fillmore, has become well known in the year it has been open for successfully creating the authentic and refined flavors of Turkish cuisine. People are loving it, and I've become a regular.

Before my trip last year, Berk gave me a list of restaurants to try in Istanbul. This year, it turned out he was going home to see his mother and father while I was there. He suggested we get together.

When I called him from my hotel, Berk announced that his father, Engin, had invited us to join him for lunch, but that it would require a bit of traveling. I knew that would add some extra excitement.

We left my hotel in the Taksim district in a taxi and drove to the ferry landing in Beşiktaş. Soon we were aboard a ferry headed north on the Bosphorus, the historic waterway that separates Europe and Asia. It would be a 50-minute ride to Sariyer, our destination and Berk's hometown.

All ferry rides on the Bosphorus are magical, and this trip was no exception. On a perfect sunny afternoon, the shoreline of Europe and Asia were clear and easily viewed. The ferry made a momentary stop at Kanlica on the Asian side before

proceeding under two bridges toward Bebek on the European side.

We took in the sights — especially the rows of charming wooden konaks, the prized remnants of domestic architecture from the Ottoman period. While many of the konaks have been restored, many sit like ghosts, still awaiting their turn. Each one is different in scale and ambition. Some are elaborate, especially those along the Bosphorus. Others are simple. But all demonstrate the artistry and refined skills of an earlier era.

Rumeli fortress occupies the shoreline hill at Bebek. It's a massive stone structure, complete with ramparts and high thick walls wonderfully preserved. It was built in 1452 by Sultan Mehmet II, who would soon end Byzantine rule and establish the Ottoman Empire.

Arriving in Sariyer, a city of 280,000 inhabitants noted for its fleet of fishing boats that go daily to the Black Sea, we

walked to Berk's father's home. He drove us several miles north of town to Gelisli, a seafood restaurant situated on a bluff above the Bosphorus. No one could design a restaurant such as this. It is the creative outgrowth of a long cultural heritage.

From our table, we watched ocean-going ships navigating the final channel before entering the Black Sea, headed to ports in Russia. Several plates of appetizers were served, and then the main act: a long platter holding a large sea bass that most likely had been a resident of the Black Sea earlier in the day. The fish reclined majestically even after we cut into it. It was prepared simply and tasted as good as it could get.

When we finished lunch, Berk's father suggested we drive to the point where the Bosphorus flows into the Black Sea. Dessert would come later.

There are no monuments and no official reminders of the historic

significance of this site, only a small fishing village with a breakwater. In the water is a cluster of boulders. I like to imagine they were there from antiquity as a witness to the human migrations that for thousands of years have passed by. If only those rocks could talk.

Returning to Sariyer to catch the ferry, it was now time for the dessert. Turkey excels in the art of making pastry, as it does in everything culinary. The local specialty was dondurma, which consists of shredded chicken breast blended in custard. Doesn't sound good? It is, though — very good.

The ferry arrived and returned us to Istanbul after a perfect afternoon.

I'm back on Fillmore Street now, basking in the afterglow of another trip to Turkey, with its fabulous culture and a stream of history that remains intact. I've never been there in the springtime. Maybe next year.



Engin and Berk Kinalilar welcomed Dan Max to their hometown with typical Turkish hospitality and a memorable meal overlooking the Bosphorus.

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## LOCAL HISTORY

By DAVID TALBOT

JIM JONES was raised by a mother whose dreams were too big for the Indiana farm town where he lived.

"Don't be nothing like your dad," Lynetta Jones drummed into her boy, while Big Jim rocked forlornly in his armchair, his lungs so badly scarred by mustard gas in the First World War that he couldn't wheeze his way through a full day's work. The boy developed a messianic complex at an early age, killing a cat so he could try raising it from the dead. One day he marched into the drowsy, God-fearing town wearing a makeshift white robe to confront the sinners in the pool hall — including his own sad, hard-drinking father. "You're all going to hell," the boy preacher proclaimed sternly.

Jones became a rising young Pentecostal preacher in Indianapolis, building a mixed-race congregation — a daring move in 1950s Middle America — and starting a rainbow family of his own with his wife, Marceline. Soon after Marceline gave birth to their first son, Stephan, the couple adopted a girl from a Korean orphanage and an African-American infant whom Jim anointed with his own name — only the beginning of what would become a biracial brood.

In July 1965 Jones convinced 140 members of his congregation to abandon their lives in Indiana and move westward with him to the California promised land: a valley in Mendocino County where Jones said they would be safe from redneck tormentors and from the nuclear doomsday that he predicted would reduce most of America to poisonous smoke and ash. It was the first exodus engineered by Jones, who was always trying to outrun his own demons. His followers headed west in a dusty caravan of pickup trucks, vans and cars.

As the Peoples Temple established itself in Redwood Valley — recruiting new members, many of them black and poor, from the Bay Area, Los Angeles and other cities — Jones set about infiltrating the local power structure. Though Jones told his flock that the one true God was socialism, the church worked hard to win over the Republican establishment that controlled Ukiah, the county seat. The Peoples Temple bought tickets to local Republican fundraisers, bombarded GOP politicians with flattering letters and contributed to their campaigns. Jones announced that he was a registered Republican and was supporting Nixon for president in 1968, and



Jim Jones established the Peoples Temple on Geary between Fillmore and Steiner.

## The Peoples Temple's Roots in the Fillmore

Jim Jones moved into the neighborhood at its most vulnerable moment

even befriended the head of the local John Birch Society.

IT DID NOT take long for Jones, always looking for the big stage that his mother envisioned for him, to outgrow the Redwood Valley. He began extending feeders into San Francisco, leading weekly services at a junior high school auditorium in the Fillmore as early as 1970. Long before George Moscone came into their sights, temple officials wooed Mayor Joe Alioto, buying 100 tickets to a breakfast fundraiser for Alioto in 1973 and sending him a box of homemade candy in 1975.

That year, the Peoples Temple moved its

headquarters to San Francisco, taking over an old temple next to the Black Muslim mosque on Geary Boulevard then occupying the Fillmore Auditorium. It was an eerie synchronicity — the building once a haven for the Zebra butchers sitting side by side with the temple that would become infamous as the headquarters of the deadliest cult in U.S. history.

Using the same bag of tricks he used on politicians — including donations, bouquets of flattery and his considerable personal charm — Jim Jones won over key black church leaders in the Bay Area, including activist pastors Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial in the Tenderloin

and J. Alfred Smith of the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland. With Jones's impassioned pulpit performances and his organization's social outreach programs, including a free medical clinic and food and clothing donations, the Peoples Temple soon established firm roots in the devastated Fillmore neighborhood. Traditional black churches — whose pastors "preached the sweet by-and-by," in the Rev. Smith's words, and limited their social services to Christmas baskets and giveaways — found it hard to compete with Jones's theatrical evangelism. The white preacher began luring away hundreds of black worshippers, massive "sheep stealing" that rival black ministers grumbled about but did little to contradict.

JONES MOVED INTO the Fillmore at its most vulnerable moment. Urban renewal czar Justin Herman had "literally destroyed the neighborhood," observed neighborhood activist Hannibal Williams, and "people were desperate for solutions, something to follow. Jim Jones was another solution. He had a charismatic personality that won the hearts and souls of people. And people followed him to hell. That's where Jim Jones went. That's where he took the people who followed him."

In the beginning, Jones was greeted as a "godsend" in the black community, remarked Rev. Smith. Here was a white pastor who "had the gift of communicating with black people. He didn't communicate in the sterile way of the seminary. No, if you listen to Jones's sermons, you can hear him following the rhythms and cadences to match the beating of the human heart."

And his flock, ignored and scorned by society, was electrified by Jones's visions of a new Eden. Everybody was exalted in his services. Even the lowliest recovering drunks and addicts. "He made us feel special, like something bigger than ourselves," said one temple member. "Total equality, no rich or poor, no races," said another. "We were alive in those services," testified one more. "We had life, soul power."

Jones — an oddball and renegade his entire life, someone who never felt at home in his own skin — had found his identity by taking on a black persona. He saw himself following in the footsteps of Malcolm and Martin, leading "this" people out of bondage and into the promised land.

In reality, Jones maintained a racial hierarchy within the organization. While church membership was primarily black, the 37-member planning commission, as Jones called his leadership council, was

dominated by white women — at least six of whom were his sexual conquests and firmly under his sway. "When people talk about my father manipulating black people, that's true," said Jim Jones Jr., the preacher's black adopted son. "It was politically advantageous for him to give me his name."

There was something exhibitionistic about the way that Jones and his wife treated their black son. "I was the chosen one," he said. "I was more loved in my family than the other kids, even their biological son, Stephan. I remember Mom wiping charcoal off a dirty pot one day and rubbing it all over her face — to show that we were all black."

JONES SOON LEARNED that his control over a well-organized, mixed-race army of some 8,000 dedicated followers gave him major stature with San Francisco's liberal elite. Redevelopment had bulldozed the Fillmore's political power into the ground. But now this strange white man with the hipster shades, Indian-black hair and cadences of a black Bible-thumper seemed to be erecting a new political power line into the rubble-strewn, crime-ridden no-man's-land. Jones could be counted on to deliver busloads of obedient, well-dressed disciples to demonstrations, campaign rallies and political precincts. The city's liberal Burton machine quickly identified the Peoples Temple juggernaut as a potentially game-changing ally in its long battle to take over city hall.

It was Willie Brown who first recognized that Jones's organization could play a pivotal role in his friend George Moscone's run for mayor. A meeting was set up between Jones and Moscone in the office of Don Bradley, the candidate's veteran campaign manager. Bradley was initially cautious. "I was a little leery we were getting into something like the Moonies," he later recalled. But after he looked into the temple's campaign history in Mendocino and saw how effective it was in delivering victories there, Bradley enthusiastically embraced Jones's volunteer army. Nearly 200 temple members showed up at Moscone headquarters, fanning out to campaign in some of the city's toughest neighborhoods, and helping the candidate finish first in the November 1975 election.

Jim Jones made sure that George Moscone never forgot his political debt to Peoples Temple. The man who began his term in City Hall with a ringing promise to make San Francisco a beacon of enlightenment would start off his administration with a wretched burden on his back. The



The throne from which Jim Jones presided over his congregation in the Guyana jungle.

Many families in the Fillmore were touched by the loss of someone in Jonestown.

mayor could never rid himself of the stench of contagion that Jones brought with him, and as time went by, the power-hungry preacher only sunk his fangs in deeper.

"Jim Jones helped George Moscone run this city," said Jim Jones Jr., a chillingly matter-of-fact assessment of the temple leader's creeping encroachment in San Francisco.

Political leaders, aware of Jones's ability to deliver — or manufacture — votes, lined up to pay tribute to the preacher. He worked his way into the good graces of officials high and low — most of them Democrats, since that was the party in power in California and San Francisco in

the mid-1970s. But Jones was also happy to exchange mutually complimentary correspondence with the offices of Ronald Reagan and statesman Henry Kissinger.

WHEN THE STORY "Inside Peoples Temple" was published in *New West* magazine in 1977, it marked the beginning of the end for Jones's sinister reign in San Francisco. The article, written by *Chronicle* reporter Marshall Kilduff and *New West* reporter Phil Tracy, was based on the disturbing accounts of many of the same defectors who had taken their complaints to the San Francisco DA's office, only to see them bottled up. They

told of the beatings, the bizarre temple ceremonies, the confiscation of members' money and assets and the political empire building throughout the state.

Before the *New West* article hit the newsstands in late July, Jim Jones ran off to Guyana, leaving his stunned liberal supporters in San Francisco to make sense of it all. Moscone was privately rattled by the magazine's charges, but he and the rest of the city's liberal elite publicly closed ranks behind the temple leader. After Jones took flight, the temple officials who were still in San Francisco organized a rally in their Geary Boulevard citadel to show support for their embattled leader.

Willie Brown was still willing to shill for Jones, blaming his flight on his political enemies. "When somebody like Jim Jones comes on the scene," Brown told the gathering, "that absolutely scares the hell out of most everybody occupying positions of power in the system." The assembly then listened raptly as Jones himself ranted over a long-distance radio hookup, denouncing his tormentors as "bitches" and "bastards," sounding more like a tantrum-throwing brat than an esteemed religious leader.

By the fall of 1977, as Jim Jones hunkered down in Guyana's steaming tropical wilderness with his flock of more than 1,000 souls, disturbing reports about the "utopian" community began filtering back to the Bay Area. But political supporters like Harvey Milk, newly elected to the board of supervisors, stuck by the increasingly fanatical leader, out of fear, expedience or stubborn loyalty.

In reality, the Jonestown "paradise" was a nightmarish Third World police state. Everyone but the youngest and oldest were forced to work like mules from dawn to dusk in the sweltering fields, scratching out a living from the wild jungle terrain. Chronically short of food, residents struggled to keep their weight up with starchy meals like cassava bread drenched in brown syrup and rice soured with gravy. Families and lovers were forced to live apart, relatives were pitted against one another, neighbors were ordered to inform on each other.

In the glorious isolation of Jonestown, under his thorny canopy, Jones surrendered fully to his drug-filled manias. He created an Orwellian dystopia and forced his captive followers to live in it. The nights were the worst, as the jungle's dark silence was broken by a ghastly soundtrack of howler monkeys' screechings and Jones's sudden eruptions over the loudspeakers. Father's voice was everywhere: in the huts,

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outhouses, fields. There was no getting away from his sleepless ramblings.

"White Night!" Father would yell in the deepest black of night, jolting his followers from their exhausted slumber. "White Night!" Residents were rushed toward the glaring lights of the pavilion, the elderly shuffling along in a daze, the children crying. When they were all gathered there — Jones, spazzy and hot-wired on speed — told them that the U.S. government was about to pounce. They had to act quickly.

"Hear that sound?" Father asked them. "The mercenaries are coming. The end has come. Time is up. Children . . . line up in two queues, one on either side of me."

The guards stood solemn vigil over a large vat next to Jones.

"It tastes like fruit juice, children. It will not be hard to swallow."

The White Night drill. It was terrifying but not real. Until the day it was.

**N**OVEMBER 18, 1978: No one can stop Jim Jones now. The big aluminum vat is brought out. This time, the grape Flavor Aid is laced with potassium cyanide. In his eerie singsong voice, Jones urges his flock to take their final communion — babies and children first. Ghostly church music plays in the background.

It carries the soul to listen to the infants' screaming and crying. As the children begin their death throes — vomiting and bleeding through their noses and gasping for breath — Jones urges them to stay quiet. "Look children, it's just something to put you to rest."

Many parents are now hysterical, watching their children die, and Jones scolds them: "We must die with some dignity." But one mother can't stop wailing.



This article on the Peoples Temple is excerpted with author David Talbot's permission from *Season of the Witch*, his new book on San Francisco in the 1960s and '70s published by Free Press, a division of Simon & Schuster.

## New Book Traces the Rise, Fall of the Peoples Temple

"Mother, Mother, Mother, Mother, Mother, please," croons Jones, whose own hysteria seems held down only by sedatives.

"Mother, please, please, please. Don't do this. Lay down your life with your child. But don't do this."

Jones seems offended that people are not dying according to his choreography. "Keep your emotions down," he commands. "I don't care how many screams you hear. I don't care how many anguished cries, death is a million times preferable to 10 more days of this life."

Many Jonestown residents did not agree with their raving leader that day. But there was no escape. The pavilion was surrounded by armed security guards. One survivor saw dozens of people being dragged to the tub

of purple-colored poison and estimated that about 60 adults were forcibly injected with the poison.

Jonestown has become widely known as the biggest mass suicide in history. But with so many adult members of the community strong-armed to their doom, hundreds of children murdered and many parents so anguished that they could not help but join their little ones in death, it is more appropriate to call Jonestown a slaughter. Even those who went to their deaths singing Jones's praises were victims of his con. Incarcerated in a jungle concentration camp and robbed of their free will, they were programmed to follow their leader to the gates of hell.

"Free at last," moans Jim Jones near

the end, before someone puts a bullet to his head, his preferred method of exit. The invocation of Martin Luther King was the one last sacrifice by the man who had wrapped himself in the glorious rhetoric of suffering and resistance.

When Jones staged his grand escape, he did not simply destroy over 900 lives and plunge thousands more into bottomless grief. He poisoned a language of social justice. Everyone who had joined hands with his crusade, whether for opportunistic or idealistic reasons, was now contaminated by Jonestown. As the news images of the bloated corpses sprawled in the dust were beamed back to San Francisco, the city shuddered. The same free air that had nurtured the beats, hippies, gays and a growing garden of the imagination had given birth to a monster.

**A**S THE GRISLY spectacle in Guyana was revealed, the Fillmore neighborhood was filled with wailing and tears. Ravaged by redevelopment, poverty, drugs and crime, San Francisco's black heartland reeled once more. Nearly every family in the neighborhood was touched by the loss of someone in Jonestown.

Shrieking relatives and frenzied reporters and TV crews besieged the Peoples Temple building on Geary. Family members, uncertain about the fates of their loved ones, demanded information. Inside the barricaded church, the remnants of Jones's holy army — the ones who had been left behind to take care of temple business in San Francisco — wandered in a daze, trying to figure out what to do. A few spluttered with rage, frustrated that they had not been included in Jones's Rapture. Others railed against the enemy: the faceless government agents whom they were convinced had wiped out Jonestown.

## BODY & SOUL



## SIGNS of FAITH

St. Benedict's is one of only four Catholic parishes for the deaf in the U.S.

BY MAURA HURLEY  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL DUNN

**W**HEN 37-YEAR-OLD San Francisco resident Michael Callejas was young, he accompanied his parents to Mass on Sunday, but couldn't fully understand the priest.

"I felt left out," he said recently.

Today, Callejas, born deaf to hearing parents, is part of the lively community in the neighborhood's St. Benedict Parish for the Deaf at St. Francis Xavier Church, located at the corner of Octavia and Pine streets — and he has no trouble understanding the priest. Mass there is celebrated in American Sign Language, and

most people who attend are deaf or friends or relatives of deaf parishioners. St. Benedict's is one of only four deaf parishes in the United States.

Attend St. Benedict's weekly 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass and you'll receive a warm welcome as well as an introduction to deaf culture — the emotional and social bond among non-hearing people. At the altar is Ugandan native Father Paul Zirimenya, the church's pastor for the past six years, who has been deaf since the age of six. As he signs the Mass, an interpreter translates the signs into English while a large screen to the right of the altar provides the text of the Mass to help people follow along.

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Father Paul Zirimenya, the pastor of St. Benedict's, has been deaf since the age of six. He is one of only 12 deaf priests in the United States.

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## Fingers Fly at Parish for the Deaf

*"It's like finding an oasis in the middle of the desert."*

► FROM PAGE 11

Deaf parishioners, fingers flying, sign the Lord's Prayer and other responses and stand up to ask for prayers from the congregation for everyone from sick loved ones to soldiers fighting in Afghanistan.

And when Father Zirimenya asks parishioners to extend their hands in peace to their neighbors in the church, members of the congregation walk up and down the aisles greeting everyone. It's a striking scene for those accustomed to the more subdued ritual in most hearing churches, where parishioners typically interact cursorily and only with their immediate neighbors. There's nothing subdued about the peace offering at St. Benedict's.

After Mass, parishioners gather downstairs in the back of the church for coffee, conversation and a potluck breakfast. The animated gathering can stretch until 3 in the afternoon as parishioners, sitting at

round tables, catch up with one another's news of the week.

**I**N ADDITION to being a deaf parish with a deaf priest, St. Benedict's is unique in another aspect: It shares the space with St. Francis Xavier Church, a former residence that was made over into a church for the Japanese Catholic community in 1939. St. Benedict's moved to St. Francis-Xavier in 1994 from its original location at Bush and Lyon streets when the Archdiocese of San Francisco closed many of the city's churches.

"The community was very welcoming to us," says 83-year-old Jane Lampe, who, along with her husband, Vic, has been involved with St. Benedict's as a volunteer since it began in the early '60s. "And they have done everything to help us," she adds.

Lampe, who grew up in San Francisco's Chinatown, became deaf after contracting spinal meningitis at age 19. She

says that after losing her hearing she was never able to fully communicate with her parents again. "I couldn't understand them by lip-reading because Chinese is a tonal language. And I couldn't communicate with them with signs because they never learned sign language."

Father Zirimenya first experienced a Mass in sign language in 2002 when he was visiting the United States and deciding whether to become a priest. "It was a 'wow moment' for me," he says. "I was overwhelmed."

Nancy McCormick-Kovachich, who lives on Treasure Island and attends Mass at St. Benedict's with her husband every Sunday, became deaf at age four after suffering a head injury. She says that before she found St. Benedict's she was accustomed to deaf people being shut out into a corner or even to the church basement. But at St. Benedict's, she feels at home. "Even when you have an interpreter, something gets lost in the transla-



tion," she says. "Here there's no intermediary. We get to hear the Mass right from the source."

**S**T. BENEDICT'S serves deaf Catholics and their families in eight counties, from Santa Rosa to Monterey and from Oakland to Fresno. It's a tall order for a small church with one priest and not much money. Father Zirimenya, who visits the sick and brings the sacraments to deaf Catholics throughout the area, says the traveling is the hardest part of his job.

"When the deaf actually see a priest sign the sacrament of baptism, they understand completely," Father Zirimenya says. "For the deaf to have access to their sacramental life in sign language is like finding an oasis in the middle of the desert."

Three years ago, Gwen and Aaron Cruz got married at St. Benedict's with Father Zirimenya officiating. The ceremony lasted three hours to accommodate text in

Chinese for Gwen's family and in English for Aaron's, with everything translated into American Sign Language. "It was so important to have Father Paul perform the ceremony," Gwen says. "And since then, he always checks up on us to see how we are doing as a couple."

Griffin Tyree, 22, a graduate of U.C. Davis, first went to St. Benedict's while attending Lowell High School in the city because it was close to his aunt's house. "I was intrigued by the sign language in combination with the English and the intimacy you get with a small church. And Jane Lampe noticed me as a newcomer and was very welcoming, so I decided to go back," he says. "Each time I go, I'm astounded at how nurturing and supportive everyone is."

He adds that at St. Benedict's, a hearing person gets to experience the feeling of being in the minority, the way the deaf do in the hearing world. The difference, he says, is that



"you're really welcomed into that world."

St. Benedict's faces many challenges. One is the difficulty of attracting young people to the church, a problem other Catholic churches are also experiencing. "The community is getting older, but not enough young people are taking their places," Griffin Tyree says.

Commuting is another problem for many. Deaf Catholics are scattered all over the Bay Area and beyond, so traveling to San Francisco can be time-consuming and expensive.

And poor health can also be a barrier. For years 83-year-old Patty Nobriga, once a champion ice skater, took part from her San Pablo home to St. Benedict's, but now she attends only sporadically because of limited finances and health problems. When she can't go, she misses it. "I am filled with joy whenever I'm able to be here," she says.

To learn more about St. Benedict's, visit [stdeafatholics.org](http://stdeafatholics.org).

St. Benedict Parish for the Deaf at St. Francis Xavier Church, at the corner of Pine and Octavia streets (far left), comes alive on Sunday mornings when Bay Area deaf Catholics and their families and friends gather for the signed 10:30 a.m. Mass.

Twin sisters Christine and Patty Purdy (second from left), who have been attending St. Benedict's since they were children, sign during Mass.

Nancy McCormick-Kovachich (above left) is coordinator of religious education at St. Benedict's.

Maisie Lo (above right) holds her son Ethan during Mass while her parents, Kathy and Brian Lo, kneel beside them.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
1800 Scott St	3	3	1	2185	10	7/29/2013	1,749,000	1,805,000
2710 Pine St	5	3.5	1		1	7/22/2013	1,849,000	2,038,000
2973 Pine St	5	3.5	2	3584	23	8/2/2013	3,088,000	2,875,000
2331 Jackson St	3	4.5	6		37	7/16/2013	2,999,000	2,975,000
2730 Union St	3	3.5	0		0	7/23/2013	3,300,000	3,550,000
3310 Clay St	4	4.5	2	3100	0	8/12/2013	3,750,000	4,250,000
3935 Washington St	5	5.5	2	4700	6	8/15/2013	4,995,000	4,900,000
2701 Pacific Ave	7	4	5	7200	18	7/16/2013	8,900,000	8,600,000
2570 Jackson St	11	8.5	1	9885	23	7/31/2013	9,500,000	9,600,000
3960 Jackson St	6	6.5	6	8620	6	7/23/2013	17,500,000	18,000,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lots	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
1817 California St #112	1	1	1	540	37	8/6/2013	499,000	485,000
2999 California St #603	0	1	1	613	5	8/12/2013	420,000	505,000
2040 Franklin St #602	1	1	1	1018	1	8/7/2013	537,500	537,500
2727 Jackson St #A	1	1	0	31	7/22/2013	569,000	590,000	
1905 Laguna St #105	1	1	0	768	48	7/24/2013	619,000	595,000
1700 Gough St #1	1	1	1		41	8/7/2013	515,000	600,000
2075 Sutter St #419	1	1	1	677	0	7/30/2013	650,000	655,000
560 Presidio Ave #5	1	1	1	797	39	7/30/2013	682,000	696,000
112 Arguello Blvd #4	2	1	1		20	8/9/2013	679,000	700,000
1708 Laguna St #4	2	2	1	1421	21	7/30/2013	745,000	789,000
2949 Jackson St #A	1	1	1	1139	28	8/15/2013	849,000	810,000
1980 Sutter St #302	2	2	1	1177	34	8/9/2013	820,000	815,000
1818 Broadway #306	1	1	1	830	34	7/17/2013	759,000	825,000
1322 Lyon St	3	1	1	1676	62	7/16/2013	849,000	827,500
1835 Franklin St #103	2	2	1	1400	34	7/30/2013	799,000	840,000
2347 Union St #3	1	1	1	863	40	7/16/2013	749,000	845,000
2060 Sutter St #309	2	2	1	1060	44	7/19/2013	799,000	860,000
2200 Sacramento St #608	1	1	1	947	153	7/23/2013	889,000	885,000
2200 Pacific Ave #7B	1	1	1	1172	14	7/23/2013	899,000	980,000
1970 Sacramento St #102	1.5	1	1	21	7/29/2013	955,000	980,000	
1869 California St #1	2	2	1	1350	19	8/6/2013	849,000	1,071,869
1635 Lombard St	3	2.5	1	1350	138	7/16/2013	1,125,000	1,130,000
1504 Steiner St #C	2	2	1	1237	29	7/30/2013	989,000	1,175,000
2200 Pacific Ave #2A	2	2	1	1856	27	8/8/2013	1,200,000	1,200,000
1998 Broadway #804	2	2	1	980	20	8/12/2013	1,150,000	1,210,000
1990 Green St #601	2	2	1	1500	14	8/9/2013	995,000	1,230,000
2234 Filbert St	2	1	1	1437	20	7/19/2013	1,049,000	1,235,000
2200 Pacific Ave #3F	2	2	1	1850	20	7/23/2013	1,389,000	1,350,000
2112 Pine St #A	3	2	1	1953	21	8/14/2013	1,439,000	1,480,000
1902 Lyon St #C	2	2.5	1	1435	26	7/26/2013	1,295,000	1,510,000
2140 Bush St #3	2	2	1	1674	25	7/16/2013	1,395,000	1,550,000
310 Walnut St	2	2	1	1607	0	7/23/2013	1,500,000	1,550,000
2249 Washington St	2	2	2		7/18/2013	1,599,000	1,650,000	
2827 Laguna St	4	2	1	1715	25	7/26/2013	1,550,000	1,667,356
3328 Washington St	2	2	1	1980	6	7/31/2013	1,750,000	1,700,000
2551 Clay St	2	2	1	1600	28	8/13/2013	1,575,000	1,782,000
3330 California St #1	3	3.5	1	1855	22	8/2/2013	1,729,000	1,850,000
1998 Broadway #1605	2	2	2	1390	25	7/25/2013	1,950,000	1,900,000
2168 Green St #2	2	2	1	20	7/25/2013	2,100,000	2,015,000	
2867 Clay St	3	2	1	2122	16	7/24/2013	1,795,000	2,100,000
1810 Green St	3	3.5	2	10	7/16/2013	2,125,000	2,125,000	

## The summer slowdown skips a year

The foggy summer hasn't had much of a chilling effect on the uber hot real estate market. While new inventory is following the typical seasonal slowdown, buyers are still pushing to get into properties before the fall market uptick increases the competition. The recent rise in interest rates is adding fuel to the fire, especially in the entry-level market, where a 1-point increase can reduce buying power substantially.

**NEW LISTINGS:** The luxurious and gracious home at 2700 Pierce Street is on the market for \$8.5 million. The mosaic marble entryway and dramatic doorway set the stage for the emphatic experience of this home. Period details have been lovingly retained, including leaded glass windows, ornamental ceilings and a mahogany-paneled library. The generously scaled rooms accented by high ceilings and abundant light are perfectly suited for an intimate gathering or a large party. The setting is also special, overlooking Alcatraz, the Marin Headlands and the East Bay hills.

**CONDOS, CO-OPS AND TICs:** For the lover of views and light, the penthouse at 1552 Green Street offers an irresistible view of the bay looking east, north and west. You'll get a good aerobic workout getting to the top floor, but once there, you won't want to leave. The chef's kitchen, deck, finishes, custom windows and solarium are additional plusses for the property.

— Data and commentary provided by MARIA MARCHETTI at Sotheby's International Realty. Contact her at maria@mariamarchetti.com or call 415/699-8008.

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## Giving Each Other New Life

A year later, a neighbor and his new companion have become fast friends

By BARBARA KATE REPA

IT'S BEEN A year since neighborhood resident John Gaul went looking for a friend and adopted a feisty feline from a cat rescue group, Give Me Shelter. But the dapper octogenarian still gets stopped on the bus, in the grocery store or pushing his walker down Fillmore and asked by friends and even total strangers: "How's the cat?"

Gaul basks in the attention, and is always happy to give details on how he and Ari the cat have given one another new life.

"We're just 'it' for one another," he says. "That unhappy shelter cat became a happy house cat. And I'm not waking up alone. I need something that needs me. She does. And it works beautifully. She's the best companion I could have — and I think she feels that way about me, too."

Gaul got a star turn last fall as the featured speaker at Give Me Shelter's annual fundraiser. His speech, "How to Adopt a Difficult Cat" — delivered with gusto and without notes — included a limerick written especially for the occasion. He hopes to do more speaking on the topic.

Ari, too, has been transformed — into a loving creature. She now purrs as she sleeps beside him in bed at night, her head near his face, "looking rather like a meatloaf," he says. She often lies down in front of the door when he gets ready to leave their apartment, until he reassures her he'll come right back.

When Ari took up residence, Gaul's first act was to ask his caretaker to put her cage away where she wouldn't see it. "Confinement would not be in her life," he says.

But before their friendship became fully forged, the two had some work to do on each other.

"She had to learn to like people — anybody at all," says Gaul.

This was a bit easier than it sounds, as he quickly learned that the way to Ari's heart was directly through her stomach. He put



JOSE GUADALUPE VELAZQUEZ JR.

*"That unhappy shelter cat became a happy house cat. And I'm not waking up alone."*

— JOHN GAUL  
with his friend Ari

out her favorite wet food in her preferred flavors of salmon, tuna or turkey — never beef — warmed a bit in the microwave. As she ate, he would also warm her to the human touch, gently petting her from the top of the head to the base of her tail. She had let it known early on that she didn't like her tail touched.

These days, Ari meows regularly to demand petting sessions — tail included — and often jumps on Gaul's lap and affectionately nibbles his beard.

Then there was the matter of grooming. "I was sitting one day early on doing a

crossword puzzle when I noticed Ari had started to resemble a ratty old coat from a thrift store," he says. Unlike most cats, who innately seem to be fastidious, Ari did not bother to groom herself. So Gaul tried to do it for her with a grooming brush. The first try didn't go over well. She scratched him, drawing blood.

"I said, 'Old girl, you're not going to get away with this,'" he says, and brushed her completely.

After a proper interval of feline pouting in the closet just to emphasize who was in charge, Ari emerged a changed cat. "Now,

she grooms herself," he says. "In fact, her new motto is: 'When in Doubt, Wash.'"

The two also had to learn how to play together.

Gaul first tried to tempt Ari with a button on a string; she gave it one desultory swat. Other toys seemed to annoy her. She actively hated the wand with the feathers on the end.

"I had to learn her definition of play," Gaul says. "She was going to teach me."

His first lesson came one day as he was getting ready to floss his teeth, poised at the bathroom mirror. Ari hopped into the tub, peeked out, then took off across the apartment like a shot. Turns out, her favorite game is hide and seek. "Her play is very physical — more like a tiger in the jungle. What fun to learn," Gaul says.

"I'm assuming shelter cats have had little time or attention from people, so you have to observe them and draw them out from fearfulness to feeling safe," he says.


The story of the adoption seemed like a relatively innocuous feel-good tale when it ran in the *New Fillmore* a year ago. ["The Old Man and the Cat," September 2012] But it rocked many readers by tapping into pet politics, highlighting the fact that animal shelters and rescue organizations such as Animal Care and Control, Pets Unlimited and Give Me Shelter sometimes work at jealous cross-purposes, competing for supporters and donations, and sometimes refuse to adopt to older people who might not outlive their pets.

It also evoked some online responses that seemed fueled mostly by mean-spiritedness, such as this one: "A great match for a seemingly articulate and dapper man who is pretty much just another SRO living semi-bomeless guy who won't be able to afford vet care in the future or will die in a few years, leaving the cat to be placed back in ACC again, furthering its fear and distrust."

Gaul says he wasn't bothered by the naysayers, who were far outnumbered by the welshers. But that posting did give him pause.

"The old man will just die soon anyway? That comment tells more about the writer than it does about me," he says. Gaul emphasizes that Lana Bajsel, the founder of Give Me Shelter, has assured him the organization will cover any vet costs Ari might incur. And should Gaul, who will be 88 in November, predecease the cat, who's 5ish, Give Me Shelter has promised to "rehome" her.

"Old people need companionship," he says. "And so do rescue cats."

 "The Old Man and the Cat" [newfillmore.com](http://newfillmore.com) | video

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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*

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