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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ AUGUST 2014

The Last Great Saloonlord

For 45 Years,
Perry Butler
Has Served
the Regulars

By CHRIS BARNETT

DID YOU HEAR the one about the architect in a cab on Union Street who realized he was short of money? "Pull over at Perry's; they'll cash a check," he told the cabbie. "Wait here," he said to his date. "I'll be right out."

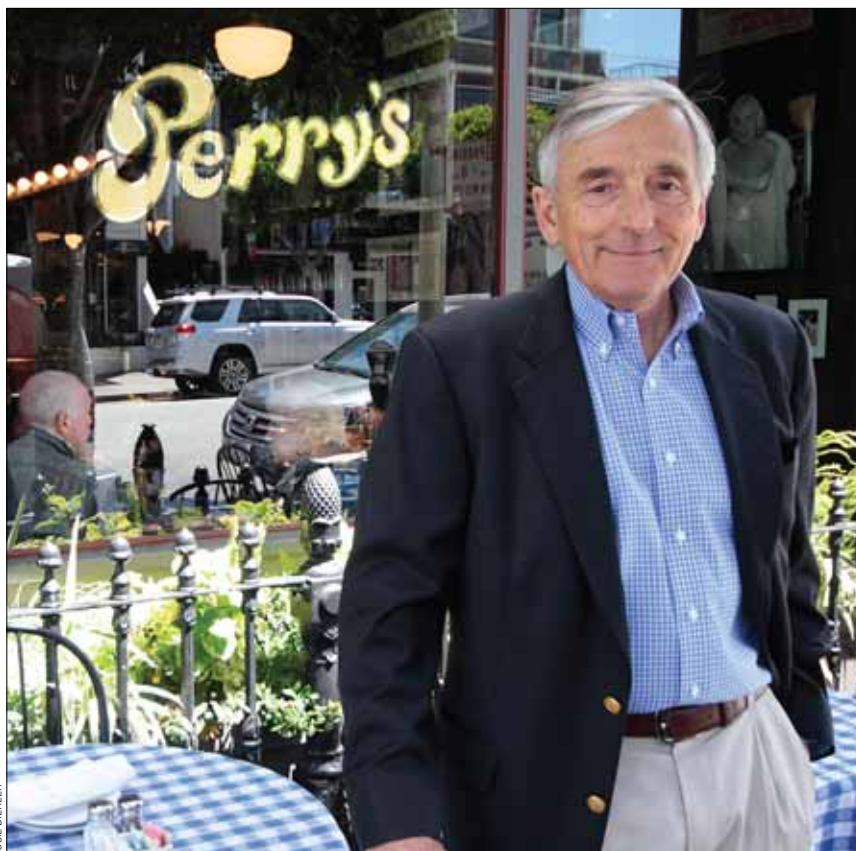
As he walked in, barkeep Michael McCourt yelled "Hey Russ, the usual?" and poured him a stiff one. Another regular came over. "Hey Russ, good to see you. Let me buy you a drink." Another pal waved from down the bar. "Next one's on me."

Ten years later, the architect, Russell Gifford, was perched on his favorite stool at Perry's and his date from that night walked in the door. He saw her in the backbar mirror, turned around and cracked: "I told you to wait in the cab."

The top bartenders in town — who worked at Perry's at some point in their careers — are still telling that one. Yet this month on the 45th anniversary of the Union Street thirst parlor and restaurant bearing his name, you would never hear that tale told by the proprietor, Perry Butler. He's too much of a gentleman.

In a city where barrooms have morphed from brawling whiskey and beer joints in canvas tents to temples staffed by high priests of the shot glass who dub themselves cocktailians and mixologists, Perry's on Union stands alone as San Francisco's last great saloon.

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"They say the classics are back, but we never stopped doing the classics."

— PERRY BUTLER
proprietor, then and now,
of Perry's on Union

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FAREWELL



Karen Pearson (second from left in photo) is remembered in a posting at Peet's.

A Familiar Face Is Missing

A local dies, and the neighborhood feels a loss

THE VENERABLE Victorian building at 2550 California Street had already seen its share of troubles. A fire a few years ago had done significant damage and left its tenants in temporary quarters during a lengthy top-to-bottom renovation.

They finally moved back in a few months ago, but the fire trucks were back again on Sunday afternoon, July 6, when one of the tenants, Karen Pearson, was found dead in her apartment.

The news traveled quickly to her wide network of neighborhood friends, centered around a coffee group that convened early most mornings at Peet's on Fillmore. Pearson was a regular, quick to say hello and make introductions, or smile at a child, or pat a dog. She was one of those familiar faces often seen around the neighborhood.

Many of her friends gathered at Peet's for an impromptu memorial a week later,

on Sunday, July 13, and remembered her as a kind neighbor and friend, one who sometimes asked the baristas for "just an extra splash" of coffee, as if Peet's were a local diner.

"Life had dealt Karen some particularly hard blows in the last 10 years," her friend Fiona Varley wrote in an email to more than 125 of her friends, "from being diagnosed with stage III ovarian cancer, being homeless for five years when her building was struck by fire, being unemployed for many years and now finally going through the eviction process."

Yet friends remembered her as relentlessly upbeat. Several recalled her frequent invitations to events at the Mechanics' Institute at 57 Post Street, where she was a longtime member and a dedicated volunteer. A more formal memorial will be held there on Friday, August 25, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

THE NEW FILLMORE

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CRIME WATCH

Outstanding Warrant

**Geary Boulevard and Divisadero Street
July 2, 5:08 p.m.**

Officers in a patrol car spotted a man on foot they knew from prior contacts. They stopped him, asked for ID and learned there was an active warrant for his arrest. When they searched him, they found he was carrying drug paraphernalia. He was arrested without incident.

Driving While Intoxicated

**Geary Boulevard and Masonic Street
July 3, 4:25 a.m.**

Officers patrolling Geary Boulevard carried out an enforcement stop on a driver who was speeding and driving without his headlights on. While talking to the driver, they observed he was slurring his words. They performed a field sobriety test, which he failed. The suspect was arrested for driving under the influence.

Driving While Intoxicated

**Geary Boulevard and Masonic Street
July 4, 8:32 p.m.**

Officers found a man who had passed out in the driver's seat of a stationary vehicle. They conducted a well-being check. The man failed a field sobriety test and the officers determined he was under the influence of narcotics. He was booked into county jail for driving while intoxicated.

Battery

**Eddy and Pierce Streets
July 6, 2 p.m.**

Officers received a report that two men were engaged in a fight. Police learned on arrival that the two men involved knew one other. The fight had started with a verbal argument, then one man pushed a broken gate at the other man. The gate fell over, injuring the foot of the man who had been attacked. The incident is under investigation.

Auto Burglary

**Geary Boulevard and Masonic Avenue
July 9, 10:24 a.m.**

Officers responded to a report of an auto burglary in progress. Upon arriving, they found a man and woman in a parked car matching the description provided by the witness. The officers issued verbal commands, which the two suspects ignored. The driver then started the car and fled, sideswiping multiple vehicles. The car was spotted a short distance away by a responding unit, which attempted to conduct a traffic stop. The man leaped out of the car and escaped on foot. The driver increased her speed and fled. Eventually another unit stopped the fleeing car and the woman inside was arrested. The investigation is ongoing.

Burglary

**Van Ness Avenue and Sacramento Street
July 13, 5:21 p.m.**

Officers on patrol were flagged down by a citizen who was extremely upset. He told the officers his store had just been burglarized, and pointed out a gray vehicle he believed belonged to the suspects. The officers saw two men jump inside the vehicle and speed away. They gave chase, activating their lights and siren, but the driver did not stop. The officers then broadcast a description of the car and requested the assistance of additional officers. As the driver continued to flee, one passenger jumped out and tried to escape on foot. One officer got out of the patrol car and sprinted after that suspect while the other officer continued to pursue the driver. With the assistance of additional units, both suspects were eventually taken into custody. The man whose store had been burglarized identified the two suspects, who were booked at county jail.

Robbery With Force

**Eddy and Divisadero Streets
July 14, 1:45 p.m.**

A witness called the police about a robbery. When they arrived they learned the person who had been robbed was an 8-year-old child who had been selling candy. The suspect had followed the child, grabbed her, took her money and fled. The incident is still under investigation.

Theft

**Fillmore and O'Farrell Streets
July 15, 10:07 a.m.**

Officers on routine patrol were dispatched to Starbucks regarding a theft. They met with an employee who told them that a man took orange juice, then left the store without paying for it. The employee said she followed the suspect outside and told him to give back the juice. The man refused, then threw the juice at her and kicked her in the leg. The woman struggled with the suspect and shouted to the other employees to call the police. Officers took custody of the suspect. Further investigation revealed that the man had an outstanding felony warrant for his arrest. The officers transported the man to county jail, where he was booked.

Robbery

**Geary Boulevard and Scott Street
July 17, 7 a.m.**

A woman was walking along Geary while looking down at her cell phone. A man approached her from behind and snatched both her phone and briefcase. The suspect then ran off. Police are still investigating the incident.

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BY DONNA GILLESPIE

AT AGE 59 I decided it was time to try out car ownership — an experience I thought I'd better get in before I reached that age when they take your car away. I hoped it would expand my horizons.

Well, it did and it didn't. And mostly didn't.

I bought a '97 Honda Civic from a friend and the car and I instantly bonded — as in this-is-a-family-member sort of bond. Maybe I'd just been too long without a pet. This was a car with a name — Seabiscuit, because he was way faster than the bus. I merrily jumped through all the hoops the DMV puts in the way. Title. Registration. Interminably long lines. And driving lessons, even though I knew how to drive; this is San Francisco, after all, with its fiendish one-way streets, hood-hopping skateboarders and cliffs that call themselves streets.

There were mostly happy times at first. Trips to the beach. Sailing up and down those roller-coaster hills on Dolores Street with Pink Floyd's "The Wall" blasting from the radio. Getting to work at the same time every day — something you can forget if you depend on Muni.

Then I started noticing that car ownership was a little bit irritating.

Once Seabiscuit was towed when I swear I parked a whole foot from where the curvy part of a driveway starts. The car was broken into so many times that I stopped locking it. It had nooks and crannies I didn't know existed until the car burglars pried them open, looking for coins. I learned right away that I must come home

between the hours of 4 and 6 to avoid parking purgatory and take advantage of that miraculous sliver of time when people who work in the area begin to leave to drive home and diners have not yet begun to flock to Fillmore Street restaurants. Show up at 6:30 and you're toast.

Another time I couldn't find my car keys. One hour before the Monday morning street cleaner was due, I called a lock service in a panic, thinking there was a slim chance the keys might be in the glove compartment. But the guy they sent out couldn't get inside either; he gave up just as I heard the cleaner huffing up the hill. No ticket that time; maybe I was saved by my tears.

And that car had a talent for finding cartoonishly large nails in the street. Who makes nails that big and why are they in the street? Twice I came out to find a puddle of rubber instead of a tire.

Another time Seabiscuit was stolen. There are no words to describe the disorientation of coming out to find a strange car parked in your spot. The police found him five days later, in fine fettle — just taken for a joyride, evidently. Their joy, not mine.

Then came the day poor Seabiscuit fell victim to negligent carricide. He got himself totaled. I wasn't inside at the time. He was parked on a steep block of Laguna Street when the person parked in front of

him rolled back as she pulled out. She left a note and I got a good payout from her insurance.

While I was deciding what I would do — replace Seabiscuit or not — I started noticing how freeing it was not to have a car. No scrambling after residential stickers, smog checks, or worrying how much registration would go up. No setting the alarm for 6 a.m. so I could hike to my parking spot and move Seabiscuit out of the way of the street sweeper. No more thinking twice about going on a trip because I had to find a babysitter for the car. No more unexpected costs for tire rotations, or for replacing those stupidly expensive rubber things on the wipers.

And then I learned my mechanic, the only mechanic I knew, had just retired. So after six months of mulling it over, I decided to use the insurance payout for a trip to Europe and began researching local car share companies.

I chose Zipcar, which covers insurance and gas. Best of all, the spot where the fleet of Zipcars is stored and available for pick up was only three blocks from home at the Chevron station at California and Steiner — a lot closer than some of the spots where I'd had to stash Seabiscuit. Also, the cars all have names, so I could relate. So far, I've taken out Ravioli, Skagit and Cheese.

To top it off, at this year's Fillmore Jazz Festival, Zipcar had a booth with a roulette wheel. I spun it and won \$40 worth of Zip time. So I'm going to take out a Mercedes the next time I go to get groceries.

The funny thing is, though, now that I have it I don't use Zipcar all that much: only about once a month. I suspect I never really needed a car in the first place.



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DICKIE SPRITZER

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CURATED SHOPPING FOR MODERN LIVING

They've Got the Blues

Along with their own hotel and saloon,
a local couple now have their own blues festival

By SUSAN STROUT

BERNIE AND LYNNE BUTCHER didn't set out to create a blues music venue in the midst of a small rural town a couple of hours north of their home near Fillmore Street. Nevertheless, the owners of the Tallman Hotel and Blue Wing Saloon are set to present the eighth annual Blues Festival this month from their renovated historic site in the town of Upper Lake.

When the Butchers decided a decade ago to purchase and renovate a decrepit stage-stop hotel from the late 1800s and recreate the adjacent saloon as a restaurant, a music program "was not in the original plans," Bernie said. Neither a stage for bands nor a dance floor were included in the extensive construction.

"It didn't take long to realize that there was a surplus of top-quality musicians and bands in Lake and Mendocino counties," he said. And there was a demand for live music, he discovered, as he worked behind the bar and talked with customers at the saloon soon after it opened in June 2005.

Having vacationed near Clear Lake for more than 20 years, while maintaining their primary home just a few steps from Alta Plaza Park, the Butchers knew the pioneer history of Upper Lake and were determined to build the restaurant based

on pictures of a saloon that existed on the site from the 1880s until Prohibition in the 1920s.

Lynne had been restless to take on a new project and the rescue of the 1890s hotel fit the bill. When she spotted the "for sale" sign, the building had been on the market for 40 years, and the town's fire department was preparing to use it for training purposes and burn it down.

It took the Butchers a year to formulate their plans, and two more years for construction of the 17-room hotel with gardens, a pool and a spa, which opened in June 2006. The couple had opened the restaurant a year earlier.

Bernie took his customers' suggestions to heart and conceived the idea of bringing diners and music lovers into the saloon on Mondays, one of the slower nights — and a night musicians are not often booked.

Monday Blues at the Blue Wing Saloon was born.

"Monday Blues was a name that caught on," said Bernie. It started with a few bands and individual musicians who would rotate through, but as it grew in popularity, "other great bands came out of the woodwork," he said.

Word spread among musicians that the Blue Wing was a spot where they could land a weeknight gig and get high-quality lodging at the adjacent Tallman Hotel.



Lynne and Bernie Butcher dance during last year's Blue Wing Blues Festival.

Bernie took his idea and expanded it, in addition to the weekly entertainment, to an annual four-day festival. "I tried, for both the Monday night music and the festival, to keep one genre: danceable blues," he said.

This year, the Blue Wing Blues Festival takes place the first weekend of August and on Labor Day, September 1. Lake County musician Bill Noteman opens Friday, August 1, for the Barry Melton Band.

(Melton is of Country Joe & The Fish fame.) Saturday's performers are David Landon and featured artist Alvon Johnson. On Sunday, a zydeco trio opens for Big Mo & the Full Moon Band. Alabama Mike & the Hound Kings will open the Labor Day entertainment, and Daniel Castro and his band will close out the festival.

With limited space inside the Blue Wing, the festival is presented in the gardens between the hotel and restaurant.



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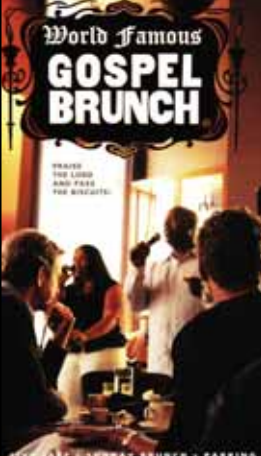
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM WARREN

The festival is presented in the gardens between the Tallman Hotel and the Blue Wing Saloon. The veranda along the side of the hotel makes a natural stage for the performers.

The veranda along the side of the hotel makes a natural stage for the performers while guests enjoy the music from cocktail tables set up in the garden area. The \$50 per person ticket price includes a barbecue dinner.

"Many people don't realize that the emerging wine area of Lake County is just 2 1/2 hours of pretty easy driving from the San Francisco area," said Bernie. "Once they're here, they'll find a beautiful county, a

first-class place to stay and good food to eat."

The Butchers present another music program during the winter and spring. "Concerts with Conversation" is a series of presentations in the Tallman Hotel's conference center, a venue that allows for a more intimate musical experience with a small stage, good acoustics and a few dozen chairs for the audience.

For the Concerts with Conversation program, Bernie drew from his many years

as a member of the board of directors of the Community Music Center in the Mission District, which would schedule informal concerts by musicians who were performing elsewhere in the Bay Area. Bernie adapted the concept; at the Tallman, musicians are able to talk to the audience about what they play and answer questions about the music.

■
"We didn't anticipate doing so much

music," said Bernie, reflecting on the process of reconstructing the historic hotel and saloon. Yet music is now as much a part of the Tallman Hotel and Blue Wing Saloon as the food, drink and accommodations.

For information about the Blue Wing Blues Festival, visit tallmanhotel.com or call 707/275-2244. The Tallman Hotel, with its adjacent restaurant, is located at 9550 Main Street in Upper Lake.

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Like Its Owner, Perry's Was Much the Same Then as Now

► FROM PAGE ONE

At 45 years old, it's far from the oldest bar in town. As seasoned San Francisco elbowbenders know, The Saloon in North Beach, best known these days for blues music, and Elixir at 3200 16th Street in the Mission, noted for creative cocktailing, are forever battling for that distinction.

And Perry's is not the hippest, hottest, happeningest bar in San Francisco where young and beautiful power drinkers pile in with pals to hang out and catch up, or slide in solo on the prowl and mostly on the make. That was once Perry's rep, in the '70s and early '80s, when it was the city's reigning pick-up bar.

Today, what makes Perry's on Union worthy of grand note is that it hasn't changed in four and a half decades, philosophically or physically. It opened with friendly, wise-cracking, well-seasoned bartenders who had the wit and brains to banter with customers and keep them coming back. And it still has a warm, woodsy late '60s decor festooned with photographs, paintings, posters and framed front pages that cover virtually every inch of every wall space.

It's no surprise the owner is no fan of change for the sake of change; in fact, he's changed very little himself. Sure, Perry Butler's hair is a little grayer and a little shorter at 71. He's no longer wearing those plaid, wide-lapel sportcoats he favored in the 1970s. But he still has the look of the boyish Dartmouth preppeie he was in his 20s when he decided to bail out of the ad agency business and, along with his former wife, Katherine, open a bar and restaurant that mirrored Martel's, their favorite spot on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

"We lived in the Marina and a real estate guy showed us this rundown building that was a contractor's office and we said, 'OK, we'll take it,'" Butler recalls. "There was no scientific study, no business plan on why we should be on Union Street, which was a pretty sleepy neighborhood back then. It was all seat-of-the-pants."

Even though Butler's name was on the door, he says he never wanted to be the "out front guy." His bartenders were his headliners — and he booked the best.

Mike Fogarty, one of the many Irish Michaels who have tended bar at Perry's over the years, now the day bartender at Balboa Cafe, recalls the early line-up: "First thing, he hired Michael McCourt and brought him up from Los Angeles. He hired Seamus Coyle. He hired Mike English, the best bartender I've ever seen in my life. English could pour drinks, have three

dice games going and tell you what the stock market was doing that very minute," he says.

"You can put a white shirt on a gorilla and he can make a cocktail. But Perry knew the importance of hiring real bartenders," Fogarty adds. "I'm a bartender. If someone calls me a mixologist, I'll piss on their shoes. Perry knew it was all about attracting regulars. Same guys. Same seats. Same drinks. Every day. That's when you know you've got a real saloon."

Irish-born Mike English, who hung up his apron a few years ago, says Butler's band of merry men and women who worked the bar and the floor were masters at cultivating regulars. "I'd work the end of the bar nearest to the front door," he remembers, "and I'd make little bets with myself. If someone walked in and I wanted him as a regular, I'd introduce him to other regulars, make him feel at home."

English signed on at Perry's in the mid-'70s when the place was really rocking and rolling. "It was bedlam day and night. Famous people from all over the United States — politicians, TV and movie people, admen, newsmen, sports stars — all of them flocked to Perry's along with local regulars because it was the first New York style bar in San Francisco," says English. "I did so much drinking I can't remember it all, and that's why I haven't had a drink in 34 years. Perry? He was not a drinker. He's a straight arrow. In all the years I've known him I've never seen him have more than one alcoholic drink. You can tell he's not Irish."

But then as now, Perry's on Union is not the place to go to be dazzled by exotic creations. "From the beginning and ever since, we've done no fancy cocktails. We don't do Brandy Alexanders or drinks with umbrellas," says Butler. "Tons of Bloodies, tons of Ramos Fizzes, which died out because of the egg thing. They say the classics are back, but we never stopped doing the classics."

McCourt, who today pulls some day shifts during the week at Original Joe's on Washington Square along with Mike Frazier, another Perry's alum, was more than the leadoff bartender of Butler's all-star team. He was the owner's alter ego, worldly enough to toss it back and forth on any subject with the saloon's well-traveled customers, friendly enough to keep them coming back for more, yet tough enough to puncture the balloons of pompous blowhards. With Butler's encouragement and blessing, McCourt created a cocktail culture of camaraderie and good cheer at Perry's that's been preserved by the barmen and bar-



In the 1970s, bartender Michael McCourt (above) and owner Perry Butler (near and far right) created a clubby place that has remained largely unchanged, welcoming regulars with its familiar menu and lots of Bloody Marys and other classic cocktails.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON HEINTZ

women who have followed in his footsteps.

"Michael has never suffered fools," says Seamus Coyle, a San Francisco bartending legend who worked the plank at Perry's in those early days. "I remember one day when Michael was working a large drink order on a busy night and this guy, annoyed he wasn't being immediately served, roared: 'Do you know who I am?' Michael looked him in the eye and shot back, 'No, I don't know who you are. I'll bet you don't know who

you are. And if you don't know who you are, why the hell would I know who you are?'"

Perry's opened, pouring 75-cent to 85-cent cocktails alongside eight-ounce glasses of the best jug wine available and priced at 50 cents — and a parade of celebrities flooded through. "It was incredible," McCourt recalls. "One of the first people through the door was Bob Mathias, the Olympic decathlon gold medalist. There

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSE BIEHLER

was Charlton Heston, Jason Robards, Joe Montana. O.J. came in every Saturday for brunch and couldn't have been nicer."

The notoriety had a drawback. "We were fighting to be a good restaurant — which we were at the time — when Herb Caen wrote an item that we were a singles bar, a body exchange. And overnight, that's what we became all throughout the '70s," says Butler. "It always bothered me. Took us to the lowest common denominator. But we survived it."

Coyle, who was recruited by McCourt, and who'd joined Perry's six months after it opened as a maitre d' to fill the tables in the backroom but quickly moved behind the bar, says Butler has an instinctual gift for running a great joint. "He hired young and old pros, people with personality — and then he'd let the staff alone," Coyle says. "He would come up with an idea, but he wouldn't force it on you." Butler's resistance to change paid huge dividends. "You want a

bar and a restaurant to be predictable, comfortable. You go to a bar to see new and old friends," says Coyle.

But 45 years don't go by without some changes. Perry's barkeeps today are still pouring lots of vodka and gin martinis, Scotch, bourbon, wine, beer and the classic cocktails, including the born-again favorite from the '50s, the Moscow Mule. Drink prices have crept up, but not that much — from 85 cents on opening day to an average of \$7 to \$10.

Perry's circa 2014 may look and feel the same, and many of the same customers from yesteryears are on the same barstools, but the place is a lot mellower. "What's changed are the drinking habits of the clientele," says Katharine Wals, a Perry's regular who favors an Early Times Manhattan straight up. "The drinks are still as generous, but you drink fewer of them — like one, or maybe two."

Bob Johnson, sitting next to Wals at the bar, agrees. "I'm still drinking Scotch, rocks, twist in a wine glass but no longer am I having seven or eight in one night," he says. "That's when the Waldo Grade became the Ho Chi Minh Trail."

The regulars who are addicted to the staples on the menu — how-you-want-it burger, calamari and Cobb salad — are still meeting their friends at Perry's, but often bringing their kids.

Kai Vance, who's been a regular at Perry's for 23 years for dinner and a beer, had a sidekick with him on a recent Friday night: his son Kyle. "I knew I could come here tonight with my son and I'd run into my buddies," says Vance. Kyle, too,

made a friend in barkeep Carolyn Cherry, who hugs and carries him as she freepours a Gordon's Gin and tonic. Perry Butler, who has five children, has always run a kid-friendly place.

The bar at Perry's still is a relaxing meet-and-greet venue. It's been ingrained in the DNA of the place since the original bartenders started cultivating regulars. Dave Dempsey, recently winding down at Perry's after a long, stressful shift at work, says: "I was married 38 years and lost my wife, but I met my new girlfriend here seven years ago and we've been together ever since, thank God. I love this place: the games on TV, the long bar, the neighborhood feeling and the mature crowd. I feel safe here. Seems like you can always find a seat at the bar."

■ Research assistance by Veronika Torgashova

Perry's on Fillmore? It almost happened

Perry Butler, whose storied San Francisco bar and restaurant put Union Street on the map as the cradle of civilized imbibing in the company of regulars, almost had a Fillmore Street address. In 2004 he had a chance to buy The Elite Cafe, but his financial advisor talked him out of it. He's still kicking himself.

"Sam Duvall created the Elite, sold it to Tom Clendening, who wanted to sell it, but it was way overpriced," says Butler. "We wouldn't have changed anything — just polished it up. But my financial guy shot it down. Peter Snyderman — a good guy — bought it when we bowed out and he's made some very good changes. One of my regrets is that I didn't do that deal."

He missed out on the Elite, but Butler went on to hang out his familiar shingle on the Embarcadero, in the Design Center and in Terminal 1 at SFO. Along the way several other ventures flopped, including a painful foray into Mill Valley. But ever the optimist, Butler remains in an expansive mood and is "looking for one more great location," he says. "I would love to go back to Marin."

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Local Shops and Offices Display an Artistic Bent

Paintings, photographs in nontraditional spaces

By JEROME TARSHIS

IN MODERN SOCIETIES, there tend to be two art markets: a formal system, made legitimate by art schools and galleries; and an informal system, in which artists exhibit their work in their own studios or in places where the bills are paid by doing something else.

Here in San Francisco, Gump's exhibited some of the most important Bay Area artists of the 1940s and 1950s. At a more local level, my experience of art on Fillmore Street began with eating rich desserts and looking at paintings at long-gone Sweet Inspiration in the block between California and Sacramento, now home to Jane on Fillmore cafe.

The lobby of the medical-dental building at **2100 WEBSTER** is one of the neighborhood's longest-running spaces for showing art outside the gallery system; the shows began when the building opened 30 years ago.

Unlike most other nontraditional art spaces, the building itself offers a market for the art it exhibits. Its public spaces are decorated with art the owners have bought from exhibitions, and individual doctors and dentists have bought art for their offices.

Through August 4, the lobby at 2100 Webster is showing urban and semi-rural landscapes (the Presidio, the views from various parking lots) by Nicholas Coley. After a boyhood in Muir Beach he studied art in the South of France, then returned to study and work in the Pacific Northwest. Now settled in San Francisco, he makes attractive plein-air paintings in which the



"Above Baker Beach #5" by San Francisco artist Nicolas Coley, whose paintings are on display in the 2100 Webster medical-dental building.

city's tree-grown hillsides take the place of Cezanne's mountains.

Artists who wish to be considered for shows should contact Vicki Vidauri, 415-555-1212.

The furniture showroom of **THOMAS MOSER CABINETMAKERS**, at 3395 Sacramento, offers art shows with the somewhat unusual rationale that art will attract viewers to its primary stock in trade, rather than the other way around. Kathleen Cohen, the manager, likes to recall selling to people who didn't know the shop was there until they noticed the art show while returning home from dinner.

Because the showroom doesn't sell for immediate delivery, but takes orders for furniture to be custom-built in Maine, being a customer involves a real time commitment. With that in mind, the program of changing exhibitions is at least in part calculated to help build a sense of long-term involvement with the business.

Through August 30, the site will feature works by plein air artist Kay Carlson, whose vibrant Impressionist-style landscapes of Sausalito, Sonoma and Tuscany complement the lines and spare style of the furnishings that surround them.

Artists interested in showing their work should contact Kathleen Cohen at 415-931-8131.

The smoke-filled coffee houses of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries exhibited more than their share of local artists' work, and it is perhaps a sign of our health-conscious times that the tradition is carried on by **LITEBITE**, which offers low-calorie, low-fat food to go at 1796 Union Street. No more dark wood paneling: The walls are almost aggressively white.

Against that clean background litebite exhibits black-and-white photographs, most recently landscapes and city views by Rodney Johnson. Although he describes himself as a lifelong hobbyist, his work looks entirely professional, occupying a territory between ambitious editorial illustration and photography considered as almost abstract art.

Photographers interested in showing their work should contact Angelo Ferrari, 415-931-5483.

At 1907 Fillmore, **INVISION OPTOMETRY** occupies a long, narrow space, with eyeglass frames along the walls and art hanging above. A new exhibition presents

nine works by contemporary abstract artist Janet Yelner, a prolific painter in the Firehouse Art Collective in Berkeley. Her whimsically titled pieces, mostly in acrylic and mixed media on canvas, are spare and confident, a fit with the sleek design of the optical shop.

Artists may contact Lisa Delavati, 415-563-9003.

At **DIPIETRO TODD**, the hair salon at 2239 Fillmore Street, the art exhibited pushes harder than at the other locations mentioned. That may be accidental, but seems to reflect the salon's associations with the world of glamour and its customers' hope to stand out against their own background.

In the current exhibition, San Francisco artist Nicholas Coley — whose paintings are just concluding their run at 2100 Webster — offers a number of landscapes exhibiting a quietude of line and simplicity perhaps instilled during his studies in a Buddhist monastery in southwestern France.

Artists should contact Winona Lewis, 415-674-4366.

At 1850 Fillmore, **ASMBLY HALL** sells "prepster clothing," suggesting that here as elsewhere in San Francisco, prepster can come together with hipster in a fruitful way.

A featured artist, Lee Queza, has guided his creative life with that symbiosis in mind. A graphic designer who has worked for blue-chip clients, including Hewlett-Packard, IBM and Google, he turns out a parallel stream of informal, even personal art. His show at Asmbly Hall consists of soulful male faces and male and female nudes rendered in brushy watercolor, situated a very long distance from corporate branding.

Tricia Benitez, one of the shop's owners, explains that the clothing as well as the art is as much as possible designed and made in San Francisco, often by young people near the beginning of their careers. Tourists are happy to buy things they couldn't find anywhere else, and locals ("People in the neighborhood are incredibly supportive," Benitez says) are happy to support a business that endorses their choice to live here.

Artists should contact Ron or Tricia Benitez, 415-567-5953.



Peter Loftus, *Silver Lake*, oil on canvas, 20 x 30 inches

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By JUDY GODDESS

FROM GEARY BOULEVARD, the St. Francis Square Co-op looks like a quiet residential development — a series of 12 three-story buildings in a garden setting.

But looks are deceiving. The Square, built 50 years ago on the south side of Geary Boulevard between Laguna and Webster Streets, was born in conflict and exists only because of the maneuverings of some of the best labor and community organizers in San Francisco.

In the mid-1950s, in an effort to eliminate what it deemed urban blight, the Redevelopment Agency demolished the housing and businesses on either side of Geary Street in the Fillmore to create an eight-lane expressway that would speed traffic to the Richmond District. Faced with a moat of vacant land separating the wealthier northern part of the neighborhood from more blighted sections on the south, the city solicited plans for renewing the Western Addition and approved high-rise apartments on Cathedral Hill.

Protest followed. The first demand for a more humane relocation policy came from Local 6 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. With 600 of its members facing dislocation, Local 6 — with famed organizer Harry Bridges as its president — formed a joint housing committee to prevent mass evictions. For the first time since redevelopment of the area had started, a protestor lay down in front of a bulldozer.

By 1960, neighborhood activism had



St. Francis Square Cooperative on Geary grew out of the wreckage of redevelopment.

It Takes a Village

Workers came together and created The Square

become a growing force as the second phase of the Redevelopment Agency's plans threatened to displace even more families in the Western Addition. With community organizers mobilizing resistance to mass evictions, Mayor John Shelley designated nine acres of land in the Western Addition for low and moderate-income housing.

"Harry Bridges was a great organizer, but it wouldn't have worked without Lou Goldblatt of the Pacific Maritime Association," recalls Claude Stoller, one of

the architects of The Square. "Lou had a brother-in-law in the housing business and he knew how much developers took off the top. He had the idea of using pension funds as seed money for moderate-income housing."

Within months, Mayor Shelley accepted the plan. Construction of the 299-unit St. Francis Square Cooperative began in 1962 and was completed the next year.

At the opening in June of a photo exhibit

at the San Francisco Public Library celebrating the opening of St. Francis Square, Stoller recounted the effort to create a family-friendly environment.

"Communities need a safe place for kids to play and for families to congregate. We needed the city to agree to close off Buchanan and O'Farrell streets so kids could ride their bikes, play, run around," he said. "The fire department had concerns about access, but there was a large meeting and I talked with them about my experience growing up with grass in a co-op in the Bronx. By the end of my talk, they were crying."

Buy-in costs were kept low to accommodate moderate-income families: \$410 for a one-bedroom unit, \$510 for a two-bedroom unit and \$610 for a three-bedroom unit. An additional monthly maintenance fee of \$84 to \$140 covered utilities, mortgage, insurance, taxes and maintenance. New residents were selected who met federal government racial guidelines: 50 percent white, 25 percent black and 25 percent other, with priority given to those displaced by redevelopment.

"There were hundreds of children running around, and it was heaven," says Steven Grigsby, who lived in The Square as a young child, and whose sister and niece are current residents. "It was wonderful growing up there. The common space made it easy for everyone to watch out for us. Every resident knew us by name and they knew our families. It really was a village. We didn't notice racial differences. The Square was our world."

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Looking west from Laguna Street in August 1961, construction of Geary Blvd. was underway. In January 1961, a sign went up on Geary announcing construction of St. Francis Square.



Celebrating 50 years

"St. Francis Square: Celebrating 50 Years of Cooperative Living," an exhibition of historic photographs, memorabilia and interviews, is on display through August 23 at the San Francisco History Center, located on the 6th Floor of the Main Library at 100 Larkin Street.

residents handled most of the maintenance.

Duke Rideaux, an original resident who still lives in The Square, recalls that Yardbirds, the name given the volunteer group of residents who landscaped the grounds, was a popular committee: "We were all young then, and we could handle the work. The youngsters participated too," he says. "There was always a picnic or a potluck after, with lots of beer. Within six months, I knew all my neighbors."

In 2002, two years before paying off the development's 40-year mortgage, residents voted on whether to continue as a limited equity co-op with low buy-in rates, convert

to condos or allow sales at market rate. They decided to convert to market rate sales.

"People were older, they had built up equity and they wanted to realize it. Some wanted to move out of California to live near their families," says Norm Young, an early resident and current president of the board at St. Francis Square. "We had no idea what the units would sell for. San Francisco has a unique housing market and no other limited equity co-op had ever been in this situation."

According to real estate records, two-bedroom units were then priced at around \$269,000. They now list for about \$360,000.

Janet Tom was one of the first resi-

dents to purchase a unit at market rate. "The closest thing I found to a community was St. Francis Square," she says. "I know someone in practically each of the buildings. I see them at committee meetings, the laundromat, walking their dogs or working together on projects. I feel like the co-op is part of my extended family."

Betty Traynor, another resident who bought in after the change to market rate, was not necessarily looking for a cooperative. "But I'm very happy to be living in one. I like the cooperative spirit and the democratic way the complex is run," she says. "A big part of my reason for moving here was the location, amount of space in the units, the beautiful landscaping — and the price."

St. Francis Square was and is the best deal in town."

"I love this place," says Marcia Peterzell, a resident of 35 years. "It's the family home I never had. When I moved in, I had young children; now my daughter and my grandson live here. We've got a built-in support system. We know each other; we're here for each other."

Early residents are now seniors, and many of the new residents are single, older women. "Today we've got new issues," Peterzell says. "Now we need to help each other age. Just recently we brought in the community living campaign to help us organize around aging in place."



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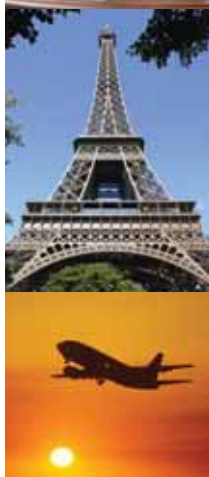
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1918 Pierce St	3	2			10	6/27/14	2,488,000	3,110,000
2872 Pine St	3	3		3,015	2	7/8/14	2,995,000	3,300,000
1909 Vallejo St	4	3		2,900	66	7/3/14	3,750,000	3,625,000
1948 Pacific Ave	6	3		7,360	23	6/30/14	5,300,000	5,000,000
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3300 Washington St	5	4	4	5,437	37	6/19/14	6,995,000	6,550,000
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1945 Washington St #606	2	2		975	47	7/3/14	899,000	920,000
2395 Post St	3	2		1,450	37	7/10/14	849,000	938,000
1700 Gough St #501	2	2		1,075	28	7/8/14	849,000	965,000
2060 Union St #4	2	1		960	15	7/9/14	899,000	1,015,000
2921 Washington St #4	1	1		1,070	18	7/3/14	899,000	1,075,000
2040 Franklin St #1205	2	2	2		78	7/3/14	999,000	1,095,000
1701 Jackson St #501	2	2		1,058	7	6/27/14	1,085,000	1,185,000
2090 Pacific Ave #603	1	1		1,437	2	6/27/14	1,200,000	1,200,000
1880 Steiner St #401	2	2		1,569	7	7/14/14	995,000	1,260,000
3878 Sacramento St	2	1		1,334	11	7/8/14	1,089,000	1,307,000
2722 Pine St	2	2	2	1,445	7	6/20/14	1,250,000	1,310,000
2205 Sacramento St #104	2	5	1	1,582	2	6/19/14	1,195,000	1,325,000
2801 Jackson St #304	2	1			13	6/16/14	1,198,000	1,450,000
2040 Laguna St #201	3	3		1,600	37	6/24/14	1,495,000	1,525,000
2410 Pacific Ave #9	3	2		1,716	20	6/18/14	1,595,000	1,650,000
1902 Lyon St Unit C	2	2		1,435	28	7/11/14	1,495,000	1,750,000
2090 Pacific Ave #304	2	2		1,663	29	6/16/14	1,549,000	1,800,000
1925 Jackson St	3	2		1,643	36	6/26/14	1,699,000	1,850,000
2200 Pacific Ave #10F	2	2	2	1,850	3	6/20/14	1,795,000	1,852,000
1940 Broadway #3E	3	3		2,080	31	7/9/14	2,050,000	2,400,000
2530 Broadway	3	3	3	2,400	20	6/20/14	2,200,000	2,366,000
2349 Vallejo St	2	2		2,000	16	7/1/14	2,349,000	2,500,000
3191 Pacific Ave	3	3	2		59	6/20/14	2,795,000	2,605,000
2207 Pacific Ave	3	3	3	3,179	9	6/20/14	4,500,000	4,605,000
1960 Broadway #63	2				95	7/8/14	4,950,000	4,795,000

Not all square footage is created equally

A pair of recent single-family home sales in Pacific Heights underscores that affluent San Francisco buyers will often pay a whole lot more for location and views than they will for size.



On the surface, 2858 Vallejo Street (left) and 1948 Pacific Avenue are similar. Both were built around the turn of the 20th century, boast 5-plus bedrooms and sit on similar-sized lots. Both properties also needed substantial renovations. However, at 7,360 square feet, the Pacific Avenue property is more than twice the size of the Vallejo Street home. Yet 2858 Vallejo sold for \$6.1 million — 30 percent more than the asking price — while 1948 Pacific sold for \$5 million, or 6 percent less than the listing price. The Vallejo Street home's stunning panoramic views and desirable location commanded a large premium.

The English Craftsman home on Vallejo stands west of Divisadero Street, a location that many Pacific Heights residents covet. It also sits about a block from the end of Vallejo, which adds privacy and seclusion. Importantly,

the Vallejo Street home offers incredible vistas of the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz and San Francisco Bay — a perk no buyer could ignore.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER, president of Pacific Union. Contact him at patrick.barber@pacunion.com or call 415-345-3001.

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'I Just Don't See Anything on the Horizon to Pull It Back'

THIS MONTH we're pleased to welcome Patrick Barber, a native of the neighborhood and president of the Pacific Union brokerage, as our new real estate columnist.

So you've lived in the neighborhood a long time.

Yep, 48 years. I grew up on Clay Street not far from Fillmore. I went to Stuart Hall and St. Ignatius. It was quite a bit different than today. As parents, we're so hard-wired to be worried about our children. In those days, there was a roll of nickels near where we kept the mail. We'd grab a nickel and walk up to Presidio to catch the 3-Jackson and go to school. It was a wonderful neighborhood to grow up in.

And you knew you wanted to come back after college?

I went to UC San Diego, then moved back. I've been in real estate for 26 years. I started at TRI and was on the sales side for 9-plus years. Then I started Sotheby's, their 11th office in the world, because I felt the local real estate companies weren't offering clients enough marketing and reach. I was there for 12 years before we took Pacific Union back private and teamed up with Christie's. I'm happy to have a local company with international reach.

What have you observed during three decades in the real estate market in this neighborhood?

The old adage "location, location, location" has always held true and still holds true today. Houses in this neighborhood — Pacific Heights, Presidio Heights, Cow Hollow, the Marina — they've all held their values very well. Even in the face of adversity like the earthquake in '89, most people held on through the rebuilding and reconstruction, and the values came back strong.

After the economic crash in '08 there wasn't a big decline. There certainly was a pullback and a slowdown. But it probably lasted only about 12 months in Pacific Heights. The way you make money in real estate is by holding it, not selling it. And many people in this neighborhood didn't have to sell. We were fortunate. We also had interest rates trending down during that time.

The demand has been pretty constant. There's been a lot of construction and reinvestment over the 26 years. People have sometimes invested well beyond what their home in the near term will ever be worth.



Patrick Barber, president of Pacific Union

They're invested in building a place to live in one of the best neighborhoods in one of the best cities in the best country in the world. People often have built what they wanted, without concern for what price it would bring. It was intrinsic value they were building, not just an investment. We've seen that so many times, where people build beyond today's property values. They're doing it for themselves, particularly in this neighborhood.

Yet now the neighborhoods south of Market Street are hot property.

It's interesting to see the southern part of the city heat up — it's 20 minutes closer to Silicon Valley, and 40 minutes closer on the Google bus. But most of the construction in those neighborhoods has been speculative. It hasn't been reconstruction of major homes that were always there.

What are the recent trends in our neighborhood?

You've seen a number of things. Of late, you've seen the east side of Fillmore become very popular. It used to be with the hospital and schools and apartment buildings on the east side, it wasn't as popular. The highest prices were typically on the west side of Fillmore in Pacific Heights and Presidio Heights.

You've seen some very high prices paid around Fillmore Street because people want to walk out their door and be living in the middle of the city. It's really changed. We've become far more urban. And empty nesters are moving back into the city into condos and high-rises.

And what's on the horizon?

When the dental school building is rebuilt as condos, you're going to see one of the hottest condo projects to hit this city, because the demand to be in this location, in large condos, is going to be incredible. I think it's the most exciting condo project

in the city. There's a real need for more housing, and the idea of communal living in these condo buildings is exciting to people.

Now the neighborhood south of California Street has become Lower Pacific Heights.

It's interesting. When the markets are hot, hot, hot, people seem to overlook the busy transit corridors. When the market's slow, people don't want to be on transit lines. We've seen some very high prices paid on Pine and Bush in particular.

Those values may not hold?

I don't think they will.

So California Street is still the magic line?

Sacramento Street. People want to be above Sacramento Street, if they can afford to.

Prices have gone ever upward. Will that continue?

Well, here's the funny thing. I was just at a luncheon with all the top agents in town and this was a big topic of conversation. I'm always cautious — a cautious optimist. I certainly don't think we can run forever at these amazing rates we've been running at. At some point, gosh, don't the buyers just say, "I'm not gonna buy right now?"

What would cool this market down?

An earthquake — a natural disaster — would certainly do that. A crisis for the country could do that. San Francisco values trend right with consumer confidence. They run hand in hand. The trend now for many of these tech and bio-tech companies is to move back to the city to attract the best employees. The trends are definitely in our favor right now.

Tech. Empty nesters. People from all over the world wanting to be in San Francisco. I just don't see anything on the horizon to pull that back. We've gotten expensive. People are being priced out, and you hope it slows a little bit for them. But we're still relatively reasonable compared to New York, London, Hong Kong.

Sometimes it seems as if there's construction on every block.

The investment in homes in San Francisco in general, and certainly in the older homes, has been phenomenal. It's just wonderful to see. I call it my porta-potty index. When I'm on my runs through the city, I count how many blocks you can go without seeing a porta-potty. In this neighborhood, you can barely go a block or two to without seeing one. That tells you people have confidence in where they're living and what they're doing.

How is it to raise your kids in the neighborhood where you grew up?

I live six blocks from where I grew up. My children were born at the same hospital on California Street where I was born and go to the same schools. It feels good. It feels like my work is actually paying off.



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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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