

# THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ SEPTEMBER 2017



COURTESY OF RICHARD SPRINGWATER

## SO LONG, CHARLIE

A true celebrity resident has left the neighborhood. Charlie, the big golden doodle known for relaxing on the sidewalk outside Peets coffee, died on July 27. Charlie always put smiles on the faces of passersby with his unusual size and his gentle demeanor. He was a frequent customer at George, his favorite destination, and also enjoyed the carpets at Browser Books, where the staff posted a memorial. Said erudite Browser bookman Fred Martin: “He had the soul of a saint and the body of a blonde bombshell.”

## Thieves Put a Target on Fillmore

But police doubt there’s a dramatic increase in crime

By Chris Barnett

A SURGE IN daring grab and run thefts is plaguing Fillmore Street merchants.

Salespeople at upscale fashion boutiques on upper Fillmore say shoplifting has now morphed into blatant thievery and some fear for their personal safety. Merchants report numerous instances — more than half a dozen in August alone — in which people case a store, wait until staffers are distracted, then scoop up merchandise and dash out.

Police play down the idea of a crime spree.

“I’m not certain there is a dramatic increase in crime,” says Lt. Michael Nevin of Northern Station. “What happens is that once people are talking about it on social media, which is useful, sometimes the stories are repeated over and over again.”

That’s cold comfort for neighborhood retailers, who say they are increasingly on edge.

“Many merchants feel the grab and run crimes are increasing and getting more violent,” says Vas Kiniris, executive director of the Fillmore Merchants Association and the owner of the Zinc Details design shop. “There have been no injuries so far, but employees tell us they feel unsafe in their work environment.”

Sharon Haag, manager of the Lilith boutique at 2029 Fillmore, says the crime is “nonstop.” She tells of a man and woman scanning her store from outside, then walking in, splitting up and suddenly grabbing merchandise before bolting. “I’m paranoid,” she says. “This street is too important. We need protection.”

Lindsay Schutzman, assistant manager of the Sandro boutique at 2033 Fillmore, tells of an “older, disheveled man” stealing a \$1,600 leather coat. Then, several weeks later, another person came in to return it for a cash refund, claiming it didn’t fit.

Workers at other neighborhood boutiques, including Intermix, Eileen Fisher, Curve, Scotch & Soda, Mio and Rebecca Minkoff, also report being hit by grab and run thieves in recent weeks.

In late August, a man walked into SpaceNK, the cosmetics shop on the corner of Fillmore and Pine, and slipped a \$260 facial product into his jacket.

“He denied it but got hostile, left with it

TO PAGE 3 ►

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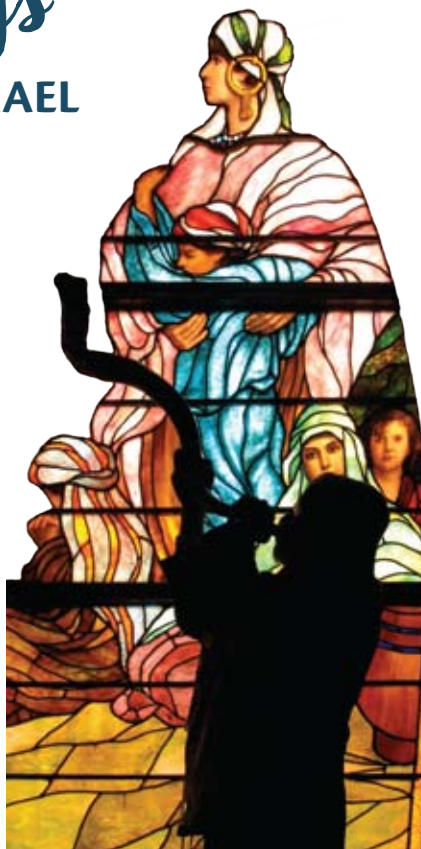
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## UPFRONT



TIM CAMPBELL

Watch out for your neighbor Mary Risley, driving in her 1974 Alfa Romeo.

## Have You Seen Her Lately?

HAVE YOU seen me lately, driving around the neighborhood in my red 1974 Alfa Romeo?

I'm the person gesturing and yelling, "Stop at the stop sign!"

I'm the person gesturing and yelling, "Don't run the red light!"

I'm the person gesturing and yelling, "Walk in the crosswalk!"

I'm the person gesturing and yelling, "Use your turn signal!"

It's been 50 years since I got my first driver's license. And I still remember the rules and regulations of being a good driver. Where have they gone? How have we gotten to the point where so many drivers are so impatient and inconsiderate? I know, I know — traffic is so bad, there are so many more cars on the road now and drivers are always having to manipulate around delivery trucks and wi-fi buses.

However, if we do have to take our cars, isn't it a good idea to respect the rules of the road and have consideration for our fellow drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians? There's no harm in letting the other guy go first. There's no harm in taking turns at four-way stops. And there's no harm in respecting people crossing the street with the light and in the crosswalk.

We are incredibly privileged to live in San Francisco. We are also incredibly privileged that pedestrians have the right of way, no matter where they are walking. And how annoying is it that so many pedestrians abuse this privilege? They walk anywhere they want, whenever they want.

The absolute worst is when I see a mom and dad with a couple of kids jaywalking on California Street. What are they teaching their kids?

What we have now in our neighborhood is masses of people walking, bicycling, riding scooters and driving cars — and doing it in all directions.

So please: Join me in reminding other drivers and walkers to respect the rules and

have consideration for others in our wonderful city — with discretion, of course. Leave it to the aging hippie in her red Alfa to gesture and shout.

MARY RISLEY

■ We love your newspaper and always look forward to reading it. You feel like the authentic voice of the neighborhood, somehow surviving in spite of the sterile corporate incursions.

Speaking of which, what a shame that AMC has ruined the experience of going to the Kabuki (Sundance) theaters. Now it's cold, impersonal — lots of little things. Overall the feeling is that the soul has been sucked out of the place. And to think we all used to look forward to walking over there on Friday or Saturday evening for a movie after having dinner on Fillmore Street. Is there any hope they'll sell this to someone who can bring it back to life? Any possibility Robert Redford could come back?

I'm 100 percent with your reader who said how much she loved Millard's on Fillmore in the old days. It was great and so missed.

ALLEN GLEAZER

■ [Re "He Ate at Sugar's," August issue]:

When I lived on Buchanan Street (between Clay and Sacramento) in 1973, I went to Sugar's Broiler quite a few times for their burgers. Their burgers were big and delicious and their potato fries were thick-cut. The owners were a really sweet Chinese American couple. The wife took my order at the front counter and her husband did the cooking. I always did take-out. I truly miss this place. I truly miss the old Fillmore.

So sorry to Mark J. Mitchell, because he was not the only one who got to eat Sugar's Broiler burgers.

Thanks for all the lovely memories.

CALVIN LAU

## THE NEW FILLMORE

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### Connecting the neighborhood

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



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More fashion is coming to Fillmore

If you thought the fashion wave had crested on Fillmore Street, think again. Coming next: **FRAME DENIM**, a Los Angeles label with “a distinctly European aesthetic.”

It’s taking over the prime corner at Fillmore and Sacramento occupied in recent years by **MARC JACOBS**, whose all-black exterior is getting a new and cheerier paint job.

The popup custom lipstick store that was temporarily on that corner, **LIP LAB**, is moving into the smaller space next door, formerly home to the creative souls at **IN WATER** florist.

■

**SAVE THE WORLD:** Mark Fantino, the celebrity magnet waiter at **CHOUQUET’S**, the French cafe at Fillmore and Washington, served another famous visitor the other day: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who was back home in the neighborhood during the summer congressional break. With the *salades Nicoise* she and an aide ordered, Fantino sent over an order of fries. “These are on me,” he told her, “on the condition that you save the world.” She thanked him and coolly replied: “We are definitely working on it.”

■

**EATS & DRINKS:** There’s a new gathering place in the works: **SAMOVAR TEA** is coming to the former home of **FRAICHE** yogurt at 1910 Fillmore. The cafe will be similar to their tea bar on Valencia, and they hope to be open in early 2018. . . . Change is said to be in the works at **THAI STICK** restaurant at Fillmore & Pine. A number of prominent restaurateurs are kicking the tires and considering the possibilities. . . . And **PINOT’S PALETTE** is open at 1981 Sutter, where you can drink wine and unleash your artistic instincts.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUZIE BIEHLER



It’s private property

The guard’s truck at the entrance to Presidio Terrace has always made it clear it’s private property. Now it’s entirely somebody else’s property, since a San Jose couple bought the streets and sidewalks at a tax auction. Residents are trying to undo the deal.

Residents Set Transit Forum

A PUBLIC FORUM on September 13 will bring city leaders to the neighborhood to discuss traffic, parking and transportation issues.

The forum, sponsored by the Pacific Heights Residents Association, will be held at Calvary Presbyterian Church at 2515 Fillmore from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

“This will be an opportunity for area residents and business owners to hear from city officials, to ask questions and to voice their opinions,” said Steve Pickrell, who heads the association board’s committee on transportation issues.

Staffers from the city’s transit agency will present an overview of policies, plans and projects in the area, followed by a panel discussion of local concerns.

A Surge of Grab and Runs Hits Fillmore Shops

► FROM PAGE ONE

and we hit the panic button,” says the clerk, who did not want to be identified. “The police were here in 10 minutes, but he was gone. There’s just very little police presence on the street.”

Kiniris and other merchants claim a regular “cop on the beat” would be a visible deterrent.

“We used to have a cop walking around, but not any more,” says Sabrina Lo, manager of the Ralph Lauren boutique, who notes: “Some older men case us from outside, walk in, hide in the blind spots in the store and, when we’re helping other customers, grab a pile of shirts and run out.”

Nevin says Northern District “is adding foot patrols in the entire district and Fillmore is in the discussion.” He says foot patrols are already being deployed in Japantown, on Polk Street and in the Lower Haight. “Northern is adequately staffed,” he says, “but we look forward to more staffing.”

Kiniris, a member of the Community Police Advisory Board, heaps praise on Northern Station. “We congratulate them for the amazing job they do,” Kiniris says. “No other captain and lieutenant have been as attentive to the needs of the merchant community during my 25 years on the street.”

Kiniris says small business retailers on

Fillmore are already in crisis due to high rents and the threat from online retailers. “If we have to start hiring security guards, which some stores have done, it only aggravates our costs,” he says.

Northern District officers led the arrest of three men who on August 8 allegedly brandished weapons and robbed the Elite Fine Jewelry shop at 2480 Sacramento Street. The suspects remain in jail.

“My plainclothes officers and investigators were on that immediately,” Northern District Captain John Jaimerena told the merchants in an email, “and conducted one of the best investigations I have seen in my 24 years here.”

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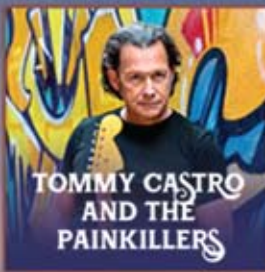
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## CRIME WATCH

### Theft

#### Lyon and Pine

July 26 or 27, 9:30 p.m. to 7 a.m.

An unknown individual broke into a home during the night and stole a bicycle and bottles of wine. The resident did not discover that his property was missing until the next morning and so did not know exactly when the crime occurred. Police have no suspects at this time and the matter is still under investigation.

### Hot Prowl

#### Fillmore and Fulton

July 27, 10:30 a.m.

A woman was at home when she heard someone enter her residence. She went to investigate and startled an unknown man holding her laptop computer. The intruder fled. Police are investigating, but no arrest has been made.

### Theft

#### Pacific and Webster

August 1, 12 a.m.

A motorcyclist returned to the spot he had parked his vehicle to find that it had been stolen. Police have no suspects at this time.

### Robbery

#### Geary and Laguna

August 2, 2 p.m.

A woman was walking toward Geary when an individual on a bicycle swept past her and grabbed her purse. She hung on tightly and was dragged to the ground. The suspect fell from the bike, but got up quickly and bolted off with her purse, which held her glasses, cell phone, money and keys. When the police arrived, the woman complained of pain, but refused medical treatment. The police have no suspects at present and the matter is under investigation.

### Assault With a Fork

#### Scott and Golden Gate

August 3, 11 a.m.

A woman asked a passerby for help in contacting her husband. When the man refused her request, she stabbed him in the chest with a fork. The woman then took off on foot. Police officers who responded summoned medics, who treated the injured man at the scene. The assailant was described as a woman in her early 60s. Police have no suspects at this time. Anyone with information is asked to call the anonymous tip line at 415-575-4444.

### Larceny

#### Pacific and Gough

August 7, 12 a.m.

An unknown individual broke into a locked car and stole property valued in excess of \$950, which qualifies the crime

as grand theft. The police have no suspects at this time.

### Robbery With a Gun, Elder Abuse, False Imprisonment Sacramento and Fillmore

August 8, 9:30 a.m.

An employee of Elite Fine Jewelry was opening the store in the morning when two men pushed their way in behind her. One man showed the 60-year-old employee a gun and demanded she give him all her "high-end jewelry." She complied while the two held other employees in the store hostage.

A third suspect was waiting outside in a car. The two robbers fled on foot and jumped into the waiting car. When the police arrived, they found the suspects' vehicle abandoned several blocks away.

The three men have been arrested and charged with robbery, elder abuse, kidnapping and false imprisonment, while the man wielding the gun was additionally charged as a felon in possession of a firearm. All three were booked at county jail.

The police then searched other locations in San Francisco and in Oakland, seizing evidence related to the crime, along with the stolen firearm that was used in the robbery.

### Armed Robbery

#### Pierce and Clay

August 14, 12:15 p.m.

A woman and a man sitting together on a bench in Alta Plaza Park were approached by two juveniles. One carried a metal pipe; the other claimed he had a handgun. The juveniles, one a 17-year-old and the other estimated to be between 13 and 15 years old, demanded the couple's property. The woman handed over her purse; the man gave them his cash. The suspects then fled to a car that sped south on Pierce Street. The matter is still under investigation.

### Assault


#### Geary and St. Joseph's

August 20, 9:30 p.m.

A man was walking on Geary near Kaiser Hospital when an individual approached him from behind and struck him twice with a bottle. The assailant fled. Witnesses called the police. The man who was assaulted sustained life-threatening injuries.


The man wielding the bottle is described as a male between the ages of 25 and 30. No arrests have been made in this case. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call the anonymous tip line.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Again this month, no information was released from Northern Station. Crime reports were compiled from other sources.



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# In Japantown, a Shop Becomes a Gallery

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANK WING

**S**ANKO KITCHEN ESSENTIALS, the anchor shop at the northeast end of Japantown's Buchanan Street Mall, is sporting a new look these days.

For more than 35 years, it has been the go-to purveyor of hard to find Japanese cookware, unique bento boxes, exotic children's lunch pails and enough teacups for every day of the year. But recently it has been transformed into an elegant gallery of fine ceramics imported from Japan.

Her perfectly coifed hair and movie star makeup remind longtime Sanko customers that Mariko Suzuki once was the hair stylist and make-up artist who transformed the Cherry Blossom Festival queen and her retinue for their annual parade float.

For the past 35 years, however, Suzuki has been best known as the cultural stylist extraordinaire for Japanese restaurants and sushi bars. Kitchen designers, chefs and architects have all come to her for her cultural knowledge, as well as her access to direct imports of Japanese style cookware and table service — often bringing over containers filled with 200 or more place settings of custom-designed gourmet dishes. When the St. Francis, Fairmont, Nikko, Sheraton and Mark Hopkins hotels were setting up their sushi-themed restaurants, they all sought her out as a consultant.

Ever the voluble and friendly hostess of her domain, Suzuki continues to greet each visitor to the shop. However, at the beginning of the year, the store technically changed hands.

"Now I'm an employee — and he's my boss," she says, pointing to new manager Tomoaki Takashima. Earlier this year, Suzuki sold the business to her longtime Japanese importer, JPT America Inc., which kept all the staff to continue to run the store. Under the new ownership and with the new infusion of funds, Suzuki was able to implement a major redesign of the space.

If you had popped into her cookware store a few months ago, you would have been surrounded by a large collection of small specialized Japanese kitchen appliances: rice cookers, butane grills and steamers and countless food containers that took years to acquire. Now most of the cookware is gone — and in a remarkable makeover, the whole space has taken on the look and feel of an upscale gallery focusing mainly on artistic works.

When she first started out, Suzuki envisioned her dream job: "I wanted to visit my parents and family in Japan and still



Mariko Suzuki and Tomoaki Takashima and their treasures at Sanko.

have a nice business in San Francisco," she says, "so I rented the small space first and eventually expanded into this large double space." She was able to visit Japan twice a year, in both winter and summer, when the trade shows were held in Tokyo. By dealing directly with suppliers, she could supply Sanko Kitchen Essentials with unique items not usually imported into the U.S.

Over the years, Suzuki also delved into the artistic history of some of the pottery she ordered and has visited many of the production studios and artists she represents from all over Japan. Some of the most famous pottery has a raku or crackled glaze called the "Hagi-yaki" — yaki essentially meaning ware — and comes from Yamaguchi prefecture. All are hand made and individually fired.

Kyoto was a favorite town for her, since it was the place where the tea ceremony was initiated and the traditional teapots and accessories were developed locally. She now sells many of the pieces she saw being made there.

Other pieces can also be identified by locale. She says: "If you see raccoons in many various forms — statues, toys, ceramic mugs or painted on — they typically come from Shigaraki near Hiroshima."

The front window showcases five distinct styles of ceramic art, from the smooth translucent porcelain glaze of high fired clay made in the Ishikawa prefecture, called Kutani yaki, to the rough textured low fired hand made pottery that varies with each batch called Mashiko yaki, made near Tokyo. A favorite trip took her near Nagoya, where she saw the famous climb-

ing kilns with interconnected chambers that "climb" up a slope — the updraft increasing the temperature in each higher chamber.

Wood fire ash is deposited on the pottery as the heat exhaust rises, creating the unpredictable but uniquely textural ash glaze drippings known as Tokoname yaki.

The studios once made the terra cotta chimneys used all over the country. But as electricity became more prevalent, the need for chimneys decreased and they turned to making tea services in the classic honey cinnamon chimney color.

Suzuki says she has no regrets about selling her dream business, because now she has a gallery-like store to showcase the elegant artistic pottery she has spent long years sourcing.

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BY BARBARA WYETH

THE FLOWER BUSINESS is an early morning affair. My morning usually starts with an espresso at Jackson and Fillmore, then a short hop past Alta Plaza Park to work at Bloomers at 2975 Washington Street.

Opening the door, I'm met with the fragrance of fresh flowers and the aroma of more strong coffee brewing in the back room. The crew is already at work trimming, cutting, cleaning, putting flowers into water and setting up the store for another day of business. Presiding over all this industry, as he has since 1977, is owner and proprietor Patric Powell.

This year the venerable Pacific Heights florist is celebrating 40 years of flowering. That alone is a real accomplishment — a thriving small business with a rarefied and fragile product in an expensive city of fickle taste.



It's a small business with a rarefied and fragile product in an expensive city of fickle taste.

# Bloomers Turns 40

## Finding joy in making beauty happen every day

Three locations later, Bloomers has weathered the storms of rising operating costs, real estate pressures, a major earthquake, 9/11, the dot-com bust and now the rise of tech culture and online shopping. The first location was on Sacramento Street, the next on Presidio Avenue and now, since 1989, on Washington Street. Our forever home is tucked away on a mostly residential block, but the integrity and classic beauty of the work produced at Bloomers continues to draw longtime customers and lure in new ones. The store, with its fresh and beautiful flowers, gorgeous arrangements and carefully curated gifts and accessories, continues to charm first-time shoppers as well as those in the know.

As we begin work each morning, we talk about the dinner we had last night, a new bakery or restaurant we've found, the trip we're planning to take, or the trip we wish we could take. We talk about family. We tell stories and joke around, but all the while we're mapping out the day's schedule and preparing for the orders ahead of us.

This is my favorite part of the day at Bloomers and often the busiest. For those of us in the crew, this is the beginning of our day. But Patric is already well into his

day, having marketed before dawn and driven the van loaded with flowers back to the store. Then it's 9 o'clock and the show is on. Phones start ringing, customers walk in. There are emails to answer, arrangements to make and bouquets to wrap. We are in full swing.

There is something significant about flowers, something more than their beauty or the aesthetics of floral design. Flowers are important. They mark all of life's sig-

nificant events, from joyous to fun to sad. We welcome babies with flowers; we thank people with flowers; we celebrate holidays, events and achievements with flowers; we express love with flowers; we wed with flowers; we heal with flowers; we say goodbye with flowers.

They are not a mere commodity; they mean something. And, of course, there is the pure wonder and decorative nature of flowers and plants, those things that make our homes welcoming and comfortable, be it a modest apartment or a grand mansion.

I felt positively giddy when I landed a job at this venerable institution 15 years ago. Some of the staff have been at Bloomers twice that long, a testimony to Patric's generosity and respect for the people who work for him. And what good fortune to be surrounded by flowers every day, to see the seasons reflected in the gorgeous materials brought into the store, and to be in a business whose mission is to make beauty happen every day.

In our recent morning conversations about Bloomers' 40 years, Patric tells us he knew early on that he wanted to be a florist. A native of St. Helena, he knew he wanted to be in San Francisco and to have a shop here in the city. That certainty and a genuine love of the business makes it all work.

I feel lucky I followed through with that Craigslist ad years back and got to be a part of the Bloomers family. I am grateful to have a job that is fun and fulfilling — and where every day I learn something about flowers and plants, about antiques and old movies, about running a small business while creating good will in the community I call home.



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# Farmers Market Gets a New Boss

Rebuilding after the rains

By Francine Brevetti

**F**EBRUARY'S RAUCOUS RAINS may have limited the ingredients you've tossed into your summer salad bowl.

The Fillmore Farmers Market is still trying to recoup the fruit and vegetable vendors it lost because of the rising waters on farmland this past winter.

To help lead the resurgence, Grant Ike has been named as the new manager of the market — the fourth since popular founding manager Tom Nichol was removed and later died in 2015.

"I've got some big shoes to fill — but I wear a size 14," says Ike, himself a former nut vendor at other markets.

The Fillmore market currently is home to 10 farms. It lost one farm permanently after the rains and three farmers returned late, offering fewer products than before. The copious rains delayed the spring planting and crops that were expected in May didn't arrive until June, says Allen Moy, executive director of the Pacific Coast Farmers Market Association, which runs the Fillmore market.

That led some patrons of the local market to fear that its days might be numbered.



DICKIE SPRITZER

*"I've got some big shoes to fill — but I wear a size 14."*

— GRANT IKE, new Fillmore market manager

Not so, says Moy. "The association is continuing to see this market as stable and growing," Moy says. "It definitely is not failing."

The Fillmore market has been in business since 2003 on Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Since 2007 it has been located at Fillmore and O'Farrell, and now operates year round.

But its location hampers the market's success. It has room for 16 vendors, with wiggle room for three or four more. It is hard to expand, Moy says, because the half block it takes up is hemmed in by neighboring driveways.

Ike, the new manager, says he is "working hard" to bring in more vendors. Just the week before, he says, he called 50 farmers to invite them to participate, but reached only two or three. He is especially keen to bring in an avocado vendor. Ike took over the market in July and says he is intent on "rejuvenating" the Fillmore market, along with the others under his supervision on Divisadero and in the Castro.

"I kept seeing them cycle in and out," Ike says of market managers. "It made me want to be involved in making it work."

Patrons shopping at the Fillmore market often run into their neighbors, as well as

their neighbors' Pomeranians. The market offers shoppers the opportunity to chitchat and rub shoulders while listening to the live jazz combo a stone's throw away. It also offers them piles of bok choy, strawberries, green beans, an array of olive oils, smoked salmon and cheeses.

Customers say they shop there because they want to avoid the big supermarkets, feel confident their purchases are as fresh as they can be — and also because they want to schmooze with their neighbors.

Neighbor Juanita Peterson says some prices are lower at the nearby Safeway. "I'm on a fixed income," she says. But she still comes to the Saturday market for the friendly energy she finds there. "I've been living here for 35 years and I come for the music and the community," she says.

Vendor Georgio Zografos, of California Olives and Olive Oil, says the customers have changed over the years he's been selling at the Fillmore market. The neighborhood used to be full of families, but today it has more single people, he observes. He makes a greater profit in the outlying farmers markets in the East Bay, he says, but nevertheless appears every other Saturday with his varieties of oils and olives.

J.P. Koheler of Homemade Italian Foods says he likes the market because, "It's a little community." But there has been a proliferation of farmers markets in the Bay Area, he says, and "the business got ruined." Still, he's at the Fillmore market every Saturday morning, along with Charlie Clark, who sells smoked salmon nearby.

Clark says he is especially fond of the market because he's a jazz musician himself and his booth is right across from the jazz combo that plays on Saturday mornings.

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“I’VE BEEN CELEBRATING all month,” says author and chef Lorraine Witte, showing no signs of slowing from the festivities marking her 80th birthday as she settles into a salad at Chouquet’s on Fillmore, just blocks from her longtime home on Lafayette Park.

“I’ve got to squeeze one more career out of myself,” she says. “I’m not a bridge lady. I’m not a club joiner. I just want to keep going.”

And she is.

Witte is busy designing and making jewelry offered at the de Young and Asian Art Museums, and formerly at Mio on Fillmore Street, where Miyo Ota, her first customer, introduced her jewelry. And she’s practicing for a recital after returning to the piano lessons she abandoned 40 years ago.

But most of all, she’s honoring her primal passion for food. As “The Chinese Lady,” she’s teaching cooking classes, filming instructional videos for her YouTube channel and penning her food blog, as well as marketing her two cookbooks and an e-book of her top recipes.

“So much serendipity happened,” Witte says of her life, which has included stints in her family’s grocery store and restaurant in Hawaii, as an actress in the original *Hawaiian Eye* series, a reign as Miss Chun King, owner of a food company producing sauces and condiments and, for a time, running in Santa Barbara’s social circles.

She recalls it all in her newest cookbook, *A Pot of Rice to the Wonders of Wonton*. Excerpts follow.

### A Particular Passion

My Chinese name is Oi Ing, although my birth certificate reads Lorraine Lum and my friends call me “The Chinese Lady.” I was born in Hawaii to Chinese immigrants and I learned at an early age that food is revered in a Chinese home.

Looking back, I realize that I first became aware of my multicultural heritage through food. My father showed me how to cook with his hands over mine. The process of preparing food became part of my identity: the touching, smelling, chopping, cooking — and then, of course, the joy of eating.

Of all the dishes, I have a particular passion for wontons — small dumplings with savory fillings, usually eaten boiled in soup. In Chinese, wonton literally means “swallowing clouds.” Heavenly!

### Daughter of a Butcher

I still have my father’s butcher apron. It’s worn thin, discolored from bloodstains and neatly folded in my kitchen drawer. It gives me wonderful memories that influenced me in a thousand ways — from cultivating life skills that appeared in my love of the earth, to many years of nurturing my passion for food.

I would spend the days after school at my father’s grocery. Next to it was our restaurant, Kapahulu Chop Suey. Before starting my chores, I would sit on a bamboo stool and eat a steaming bowl of egg noodles that were topped with thick slices of char siu and minced scallions.

After my hearty bowl of noodles, I walked to the grocery store where I began my chores. First, the dirty canned goods were wiped with a damp cloth, then on to straighten the paper bags next to the cash register, and finally to fill the bags with rice. I remember so clearly that each bag had to weigh exactly five pounds.

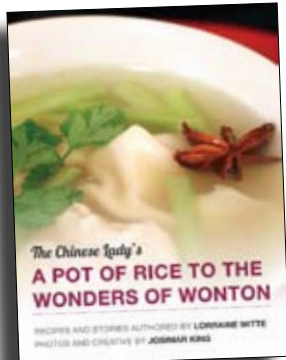
Next, I worked in the butcher shop, which was where I really wanted to be. There, my father taught me how to grind chunks of meat into hamburger by using a wooden tool to push the meat through a



JOSIMAR KING

# The Chinese Lady

Her love of wonton leads to yet another career — and now a new book and videos



Lorraine Witte (right) turned her passion for food into a new book and a series of videos with the help of Josimar King.



SAMUEL CONIGLIO

metal hole. He placed my hands under the grinder so I could catch the meat — which looked like fat, red worms. He had me place it neatly onto a tray between green dividers in a glass showcase, then smiled. This was his look I always yearned for, as it meant I did my job well.

### Strawberries at the Plaza

In the spring of 1949, my mother planned her first trip to San Francisco, and my sister and I got to tag along. My father took me to Sears and bought me a green suitcase and a matching coat. Sadly, my father couldn’t come with us since he had to work.

On the day of departure, I watched gigantic clouds slowly moving across the sky and read that as a good omen. We flew for 10 hours and finally landed in San Francisco. I felt the cold, damp air against my face. Luckily for me, my new coat kept me warm.

In the cab, I pressed my nose against the window and curiously watched the sights. I grew more excited the closer we got to the Plaza Hotel at Union Square, and I fell in love with the city at first sight.

When the waiter came after we ordered room service, he rolled in a table of food and flowers. There was a large bowl of apples, oranges, bananas and plums — yet what caught my eye was a bowl of bright, red fruit. I had never seen these in my father’s store, so I asked my sister what they were.

“They’re strawberries,” she said. I reached for one, smelled it, then bit into

it. I remember the crunching of the seeds between my teeth followed by the delicious juice that burst into my mouth. I ate one after another until they were gone.

I still love to eat strawberries the same way: slowly and deliberately savoring each juicy bite, loving the seeds that crunch and stick between my teeth.

### San Francisco’s Chinatown

In 1951, my mother and I moved from Hawaii and rented an apartment on Pine and Powell Streets, near the cable car tracks. My mother frequented Blum’s coffee shop, sitting at the counter sipping coffee and enjoying a slice of their famous Coffee Crunch Cake. With my legs dangling off the high stool, I would watch the server dip a spatula under water, then hack straight into the crunchy part of the cake. In one motion, he served it up onto a plate and placed it in front of us. The whipped cream oozed out between the layers of white cake, but for me, the best part was the coffee crunch candy that always stuck between my teeth.

My father eventually moved to San Francisco, though he lived elsewhere, as he and my mother had grown apart. On one of his visits, he handed me a whistle attached to a chain to wear around my neck and told me it would keep me safe. Each evening, I held the whistle between my lips to blow at a threat’s notice. Fortunately, I never had to use it.

I still have that whistle. Whenever students get a little noisy in my cooking

classes, I’ll gently give it a blow. Blowing it out of fun, and not of fear, is a very good thing.

### Hollywood Moments

In 1960, my roommate Margie and I were settling into the swing of our life in Hollywood.

My day job was at Systems Development Corp., considered the world’s first computer software company. In between acting gigs, I got a second job as hostess at The Islander, a high-profile tiki restaurant near West Hollywood. One night, as I slipped into my super high heels, I saw Tarzan himself, Johnny Weissmuller, walk through the door. As a child I had watched all his movies with my father, and there I stood, a foot from this larger-than-life movie star. In rapid succession, I told him about my love of his movies, my favorite moments in the series and that I agreed he was the best Tarzan of them all.

The commissary was buzzing with the usual extras, crew members and actors. Just then, I looked up and saw Cary Grant saunter into the room. He was tanned, with his famous cleft chin, and dressed to kill in his silk ascot.

He smiled and asked if I was from Hong Kong. I remember that I was so shocked that I instantly froze up and succinctly replied: “No, I’m not.” He smiled in his typical charming manner, then walked away.

### All Roads Lead to Food

In 2001, my husband and I were living in Newport Beach when he fell ill. And with his passing, I was lured back to San Francisco a year later. I continued to teach in my home and at upscale culinary showrooms including Purcell Murray, Sierra Select and Dacor.

Later that same year, I had a wonderful lunch at Betelnut on Union Street. I met Alex Ong, the new executive chef from Malaysia, and told him about my idea of pursuing wontons. I asked if he would like to write a cookbook with me, and he responded “yes” with a nod and a smile. For more than two years, we sat across from one another simply brainstorming recipes. Eventually, he encouraged me to continue the journey on my own. “After all,” he said, “it was your idea and your passion that I liked from the very beginning.”

Seven years later, this cookbook was published.

### Jumping Into Cyberspace

It was time to enter the digital world. I realized I needed to understand how to use a computer to manage all of my recipes. I bought an iMac and started classes at an Apple store. I loved the training right away; my teachers were all patient and kind. Over eight years of training, I met so many young, talented teachers with whom I’m still friends. Among them: an exceptional young trainer named Josimar King, who has especially been my lucky star. I told Josimar about my newest idea — making video recipes and sharing them on the internet — and asked if he had a camera. He quickly jumped into action, and within a month we uploaded five cooking videos. Today, we’ve shared more than 50 videos — and The Chinese Lady’s YouTube channel exceeds 100,000 views.

Our project has become a full-course meal.

*A Pot of Rice to the Wonders of Wonton is available in paperback or Kindle versions on Amazon and as an iBook on iTunes.*

# Trombonistically Speaking, in the Key of Bernstein

By Pamela Feinsilber

NICK PLATOFF MOVED here a year ago to join the San Francisco Symphony’s acclaimed brass section, in which he is associate principal trombonist. Only 25, he helps kick off the fall arts season this month, performing in the symphony’s opening night gala on September 14, followed from September 22 to 24 by “Celebrating Bernstein,” four pieces by Leonard Bernstein to honor the centennial of the master conductor and composer’s birth.

**Some of Bernstein’s compositions call for more brass than works by other composers — especially his most famous work, which you’ll perform as “Symphonic Dances from West Side Story.”**

*West Side Story* is my favorite of his works, a piece I grew up with. The main solo instruments are violin and trumpet, but it has a few little trombone solos, a couple of little interjections. The thing that’s fun trombonistically is getting to play all this jazzy stuff. He incorporates the big band sound into the orchestra and swings really hard. There’s great variety; it couldn’t have been written without the influences of Schoenberg and Webern. It’s very satisfying music for a trombone player. That should be an amazing program.

A huge part of Bernstein was his Judaism, and the Jewish musical tradition shows up in all kinds of ways in his music, with lots of klezmer-sounding parts. *Chichester Psalms* is a completely different sound world from *West Side Story*.



Nick Platoff plays trombone with the S.F. Symphony.

**How did you come to play the trombone?**

I grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, and when I heard the local high school band playing some kind of James Bond medley, I thought it was the coolest thing I’d ever heard. I was fortunate that my elementary school had a band program. I was a pretty big kid, pretty tall, and I knew my arms would be long enough to reach the fully extended position with the slide. I don’t think every 8-year-old would be able to do it.

**When did you know you wanted to stick with it?**

I did experiment with other instruments; I played

trumpet, and I sang in some rock bands in high school. I got more serious when I was part of a music festival in North Carolina. I was an average 16-year-old kid, interested in lots of things, but when I got to play Mahler’s First Symphony — it is really heavy-duty, extremely passionate, emotional — it was utterly life changing. At that point, I felt I wanted to fully pursue a career as a musician.

**Before coming to San Francisco, you played with conductor Michael Tilson Thomas’s New World Symphony in Miami.**

Yes, Michael is music director in both places. This is the first city I’ve lived in with strong intentions to stay.

**When you rented your place here, did you have to worry about neighbors complaining when you practice?**

Rehearsing is an important part of apartment hunting. I made sure to be very upfront with potential landlords: “I’m a professional musician and I need to live in a place where I can practice.” We generally work at night, so my practice is typically 9 to 5, and I signed a lease with a landlord who said it’s never been an issue. But I wrote a letter to all my neighbors and said: “I just moved here; if noise is ever an issue for you, let me know and we’ll work it out.” I’ve had friends who play brass instruments in New York, and the neighbors have called the cops. Thankfully, my neighbors have been really great about it.

**When you have time to relax, what are some of your favorite neighborhood places?**

Dosa has some of the best Indian food I’ve had in San Francisco. The restaurant is beautiful and smells like heaven, if heaven served Indian food — and I hope it does. The Boom Boom Room is a killer spot. People on the dance floor can get up close and personal with the band. And one of the best things I’ve done this year is attend a concert at the Fillmore; I heard Feist. It’s always fun to spend time in a space where your heroes used to stand. I feel that way every time I play Carnegie Hall, and I felt it when I entered the Fillmore. Maybe I’ll get to play there one day.



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■ THIS MONTH

Film fest on aging  
back at New People

The Legacy Film Festival on Aging — dedicated to celebrating the profound and meaningful, often challenging, sometimes sad process of aging — will present its seventh annual program at the New People Cinema, at 1746 Post Street in Japantown, from September 15 to 17.

“Our filmmakers portray some of the many facets of this unique, ever-changing experience honestly and artfully — and always with compassion and love for their subjects,” says festival founder and executive director Sheila Malkind. Q & A sessions follow screenings.

The line-up includes films that confront contemporary issues, including:

■ The crisis of HIV/AIDS among older adults in *Even Me* and *Wilhemina’s War*.

■ Family caregiving and the Sandwich Generation in *Mother, Child and Taller Than the Trees*.

■ The science, myths and realities surrounding Alzheimer’s disease in *Monster in the Mind* and *A Place Called Pluto*.

■ Intergenerational connections in *My Little Friends* and *Joe’s Violin*.

■ Facing the end of life with humor and directness in *Truman* and *A Lotta Life*.

And there’s no shortage of inspiration about how to age with grace, as catalogued in *Lives Well Lived*, which celebrates the wit and wisdom of 40 people, ages 75 to 100, who share their secrets and insights.

To buy tickets and get more information, including previews of most films to be screened, go to [legacyfilmfestivalonaging.org](http://legacyfilmfestivalonaging.org).

FILM

Japan Film Festival Returns for Its 5th

By ANDREA CHASE

THE JAPAN FILM FESTIVAL of San Francisco hits the half-decade mark this month and brings us some great films, and also some great filmmakers appearing in person in the neighborhood.

Running from September 1 through 10 at the New People Cinema on 1746 Post Street as part of the J-Pop Summit, the festival spotlights a 16th century flower monk, a dying mother with a determined agenda, live action manga, a trio of murder suspects, a merry widow, a mystical comet, a fateful elevator ride and a documentary profile of animated film director Hayao Miyazaki.

Here are some highlights.

■ Opening night (September 1, 7 p.m.) brings Tetsuo Shinohara’s *Flower and Sword* and that 16th century flower monk is Senko Ikenobo, an ikebana master unfazed by a shogun given to beheading artists who disappoint him. The film quietly considers the power and poetry of art in a violent era, while also dazzling the eye with the formal beauty of ikebana and tea ceremonies.

■ The dying mother is Futaba, and her story is told in *Her Love Boils Like Bathwater* (September 2, 1 p.m.) from Ryota Nakano, who will be at the screening. Futaba, played by Rie Miyazawa, named best actress at the 40th Japan Academy Prize, is a deserted wife who learns she has a short time to live and resolves to leave her family, and her family’s bathhouse business, in working order. She finds unexpected toughness that startles her ex, disconcerts



Hee screens on the festival’s closing night.

her teenage daughter and sets the world on fire. Emotionally rich with a dash of the potboiler about it, the film is a working-class epic with a heroine for the ages.

■ Based on the novel by Shuichi Yoshida, Sang-il Lee’s *Rage* (September 9, 1 p.m.) focuses on a murdered married couple and presents three suspects in different vignettes. Which one we believe is the guilty party says as much about what we bring to the film as it does about the clues given in this complex mystery that raises uncomfortable questions about trust and suspicion. Sang-il Lee will be on hand for a Q&A after the screening.

■ *Black Widow Business* (September 9, 7 p.m.) by Yasuo Tsuruhashi is a thoroughly delightful comedy with a sharp edge. In it, an elderly and much-married woman (the angel-faced Shinobu Otake) charms and marries an elderly man after meeting him at a not-so-innocent singles mixer. When he dies, the stage is set for all manner of machinations as the man’s two daughters learn their father has left

everything to their new stepmother.

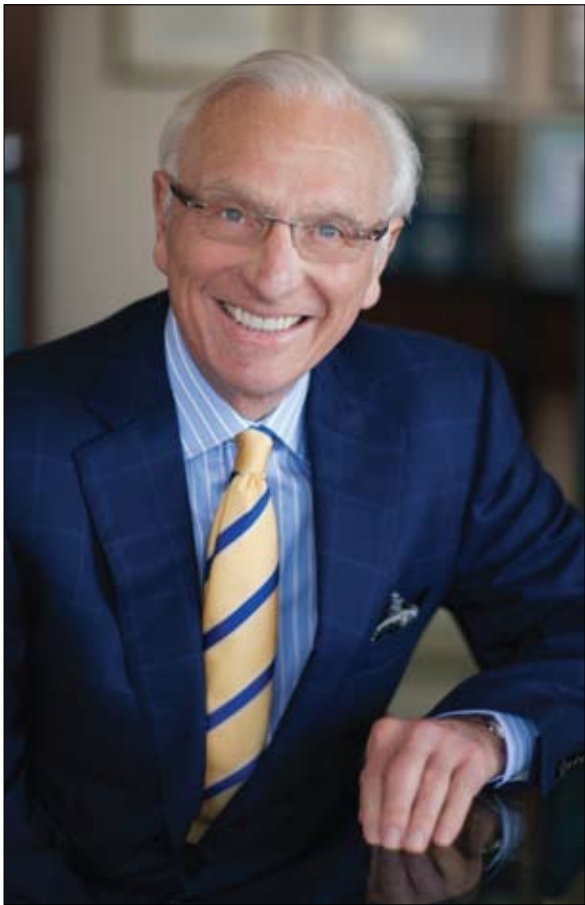
■ The fascinating documentary *Never-Ending Man: Hayao Miyazaki* (September 10, 1 p.m.) shows Miyazaki discovering the trials and triumphs of learning a new skill after retiring from making feature-length films at age 72. Turning to short films, he grapples with new technology and reveals the nature of the creative impulse as channeled through a master.

■ The mystical comet may or may not be responsible for the fantastical element in *Your Name* (September 4, 7 p.m.) from Makoto Shinkai, who is often identified as the anime heir to Miyazaki. This multiple award winning film uses the familiar device of body switching, this time between a teenage boy and teenage girl. She lives in the country, he in the city — and one of the many original aspects of the story is that they switch back and forth and eventually fall in love as they learn pointed and poignant lessons about gender.

■ Closing night features *Hee* (September 10, 2:45 p.m.). Director Kaori Momoi also stars in a story that loops back and forth between a coincidental elevator ride and intense evaluation sessions with a Japanese psychiatrist living in America and the Japanese woman whose obsession with fire has left her emotionally scarred. The non-linear timeline creates a dreamlike quality as the woman’s story tests the psychiatrist’s professional detachment and, eventually, begins to scar him too. Momoi will be on hand for a post-screening Q&A.

Go to [jffsf.org](http://jffsf.org) for ticketing and more information.

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# Kabuki, Mon Amour

By DAVID THOMSON

PEOPLE CALL IT “the Kabuki” still, as if clutching at something and hoping it will stay there. It is, or has been, our neighborhood movie theater, with a front onto Post Street, a parking garage, an alleged restaurant — and a certain dejected character. I’m being as generous as possible because I want it to remain. But I have my doubts now, and I understand if people still think of it as Sundance, Robert Redford’s place, Carmike, AMC or the longtime home of the film festival.

Over the years, there were rumors: Were the Coen Brothers really thinking of taking it over? No, those guys were too shrewd for that. Our Kabuki feels like a place people are waiting to unload.

Under its latest ownership — AMC again — the place is not doing well. You can judge that by getting assigned seats in a large, empty room and still paying a few dollars extra for the “amenity charge,” even though most of the amenities are gone and now there are commercials before the films start. You go to the refreshment area and the sad servers tell you, sorry, they don’t do hot beverages anymore because the place has made a deal with Coke. The Kabuki used to boast about its dining offerings, but the upstairs bar and cafe is closed and it’s given up on coffee and tea, as well as that Humphry Slocombe ice cream it once had.

More importantly, it’s giving up on the movies, too. It’s not the Kabuki’s fault that so many of the films are so bad, but the theater complex is moving away from showing foreign films, cutting-edge documentaries and even classics. We shouldn’t knock the idea of old films. These days, a film that opens Friday afternoon is often ancient by Sunday evening; it simply doesn’t play. So it wouldn’t be eccentric of a theater, especially one on the



Concessions at what’s now the AMC Dine-In Kabuki 8.

DICKIE SPRITZER

edge of Pacific Heights, where the film festival thrived for so long, to show old films in great prints.

The business will tell you that kids want hot new movies full of special effects and apocalypse. But when I go to the Kabuki, I don’t see many kids there. Meanwhile, down the peninsula, at the Stanford Theatre — I’m biased because I’ve helped program a few things there — lustrous 35mm prints of classics draw appreciative audiences. A similar thing happens across the bay at the Pacific Film Archive, which has been doing very well since it opened its new premises.

One lesson of that — and it’s profound — is that movie-going is not exactly a vastly popular activity anymore. But come December, showing Gary Oldman as Churchill in *Darkest Hour* or Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks as Kay Graham and Ben Bradlee in *The Post*, the Kabuki will sell out — with stars who are 60 and beyond. That happy mood will exist for a week while you can’t actually get in and a few hundred

packed strangers have a fine old time with mainstream entertainment.

All of this could reach further. If I were to list the Coronet, the Cento Cedar, the Metro, the Alhambra, the Northpoint, the Regency, the Galaxy, you know where I’m not going. And now the word is out that the Opera Plaza theaters will also soon close.

The logic is hard to resist. Not so many people think of going out to a movie theater as a regular pastime. I have sons who can’t believe it’s a movie unless they sneak it on their iPads or even smaller screens. What does “streaming” mean except that a movie is “out there,” waiting to be scanned, sampled and dumped? The wonder is that the drab but spacious formality of the Kabuki has lasted so long. This is not simply a lament or a warning. It’s saying that “movies,” as in night-out entertainments, barely exist now.

Our predicament could be much worse. Staying at home streaming can lead you, at your own convenience, into such treasures as the Criterion collection. I fell in love again the other night with King Vidor’s *The Crowd*, from 1928 — a 90-year-old wonder. These are often great films in beautiful prints, shown in the proper aspect ratio, with rewarding back-up material.

And staying home is okay, too, when it’s raining, if the coyotes are on the street, or if there are hints of some imminent disorder we dread. But staying home is also a kind of loneliness, while going to the movies once offered an illusion known as the company of strangers.

*Longtime local resident David Thomson’s new book is Warner Bros: The Making of an American Movie Studio. Its publication coincides with a 67-film season of Warner’s movies at the Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto, which plays until early October.*

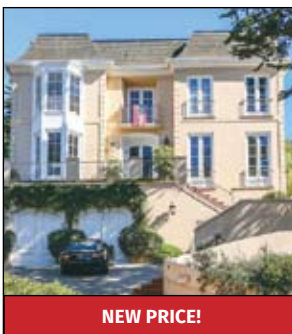
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REAL ESTATE

# A Firehouse From an Earlier Era

And an excellent example of adaptive reuse

By BRIDGET MALEY

THE VICTORIAN ERA structure at 3022 Washington Street was one of three stations constructed for the San Francisco Fire Department in 1893. Another, located at 1152 Oak Street, is very similar; and the third at 2545 Folsom Street has unfortunately been demolished. All three stations were designed by the architectural firm of Henriksen and Mahoney.

The wood frame Washington Street firehouse is eclectic, with elements of the Stick Style, but also with Italianate Gothic detailing, especially the arch that vents the hose tower. The ground floor is dominated by the doorway for the fire engine. It includes paired doors, with rectangular glazed openings, framed by simple pilasters. Capping the doors is a horizontal glazed transom, a decorative cornice with the letters “SFPD” and a triangular pediment. Pedestrian doors, with rounded arches and keystones above them, sit on either side of the apparatus doors. The lower portion of the front facade also has simulated stonework.

The second story is topped with a deep, bracketed, pedimented cornice. Paired windows at the center are flanked by single windows on either side. These upper story

windows are capped with a decorative projecting cornice. Set into the pediment above the central window grouping is a small circle formed by a replica of a rolled firehose with painted fittings and numbers identifying the 1893 construction date. The hose tower rises at the west end and is topped with detailing similar to the second story. The tower’s gothic arch gives the building a somewhat ecclesiastical appearance.

Bernhardt E. Henriksen was born in San Francisco in 1851. At the age of 14, he was apprenticed with an architectural firm. In 1880, he received a patent for an elevator safety clutch. In his filing to the U.S. Patent Office on May 3, 1880, Henriksen wrote: “My invention relates to certain improvements in elevators and hoists of any description, and its object is to secure the same against the sudden falls or violent and rapid descent usually caused by the breaking of the cable or derangements of the hoisting apparatus.” Later, in the 1890s, Henriksen also patented a children’s toy that made animal noises, indicating his broad ranging interests and tinkering abilities.

The *California Architect and Building News* lists solo projects for Henriksen from about 1882 to 1895. From 1891 to 1893, he also undertook projects with a partner,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAYNE WATSON

The firehouse remained in service until 1963, after which it became a notable residence.



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William C. Mahoney. The three firehouses commissioned by the city were valued at more than \$15,500, with the Washington Street house at \$4,800. This would have been a fairly significant contract for the partnership of Henriksen and Mahoney. The *San Francisco Call* reported on August 2, 1893, that the work on the three proposed firehouses was to be “done under the direction and supervision of Messrs. Henriksen & Mahoney, and to the satisfaction of the chief engineer of the Fire Department ... and each house must be completed within 60 working days of the date of the award of contract.”

William C. Mahoney, also a native of San Francisco, was the son of Denis Mahoney, a California pioneer. Mahoney’s partnership with Henriksen was not long-lived. However, he practiced in the Bay Area for some time after their work together and actively assisted with the 1932 and 1936 campaigns of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

An article in the December 14, 1958, *Chronicle* mentioned a threat to the old firehouse on Washington Street:

*Six years ago, the city’s electorate passed a bond issue to modernize the fire stations, and, one by one, the delightful but over-aged hulks were replaced. Now only two remain with any of the ancient charm, one at 2150 California, the other at 3022 Washington, and both are scheduled to be demolished. Both have the look of off-beat churches because of their towers, which are not belfries but vertical shafts, high enough to dry hoses.*

The building remained in service as a

firehouse until 1963, when the city sold it at auction. On February 9, 1965, the *Chronicle* reported:

*The firehouse was sold at auction by the city to a developer who learned that, because of building restrictions, he couldn’t put up an apartment house. It was then the good fortune of this quaint old building to be sold to decorator John Dickenson who has remodeled it, with no major structural changes, as a combination office and home.*

Dickinson, who supported the landmarking of the building in 1977, was known for developing a line of concrete plaster furniture pieces that became hugely popular, and are again in great demand. Born

in 1920, Dickinson was raised in Berkeley and attended New York’s Parsons School of Design. He returned to San Francisco in 1956 and established what would become a successful interior decorating firm. He became San Francisco’s most sought after decorator of the 1960s and ’70s. In 2004, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art held a retrospective exhibition of his work.

The building has had a number of notable owners since Dickinson died in 1982, including Governor Jerry Brown, who lived there in the early 1990s.

San Francisco Landmark #93, the former home of Engine Company 23, is a wonderful reminder of the simple structures that once housed the city’s neighborhood firefighters and an excellent example of adaptive reuse.



It was one of three firehouses built in 1893.



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## NEIGHBORHOOD HOME SALES

Single Family Homes	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
11 Imperial Ave	3	1	0	1,620	10	7/17/2017	1,895,000	2,244,000
1719 Green St	0	1	1	1,690	10	7/20/2017	2,388,888	2,652,000
2765 Filbert St	4	3	1	n/a	168	7/21/2017	5,200,000	3,443,750
2345 Divisadero St	5	2	3	3,100	40	7/28/2017	4,250,000	3,850,000
2323 Bush St	4	4	2	4,305	59	8/3/2017	4,495,000	4,750,000
3903 Washington St	5	5	2	4,729	84	8/1/2017	6,495,000	5,800,000
2502 Jackson St	5	5	3	4,325	47	7/18/2017	7,499,000	6,600,000
2370 Washington St	6	6	4	7,965	7	7/28/2017	10,500,000	10,450,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts	BR	BA	PK	Sq ft	Days	Date	Asking	Sale
1818 Broadway #102	1	1	1	n/a	18	7/17/2017	775,000	767,000
2201 Sacramento St #304	1	1	1	n/a	2	8/7/2017	949,000	1,100,000
1880 Bush St	2	2	0	1,154	26	7/27/2017	1,050,000	1,100,000
1805 Fillmore St #303	2	2	1	1,195	39	7/20/2017	1,198,000	1,150,000
3113 Buchanan St	2	1	1	946	3	7/31/2017	949,000	1,175,000
2655 Bush St #329	2	2	1	1,046	77	7/31/2017	1,205,000	1,210,000
2185 Bush St #307	3	2	1	1,290	16	7/25/2017	1,199,000	1,245,000
2415 Buchanan St #4	1	1	0	n/a	80	8/4/2017	1,275,000	1,250,000
2217 Pacific Ave #4	2	1	0	1,290	100	8/10/2017	1,650,000	1,325,000
2727 Sutter St	3	2	1	1,520	105	8/14/2017	1,250,000	1,400,000
1880 Steiner St #403	2	1	1	1,569	12	8/15/2017	1,395,000	1,550,000
2829 Laguna St	3	2	1	1,465	7	7/21/2017	1,848,000	2,125,000
1967 Pine St	3	2	2	n/a	12	8/10/2017	2,295,000	2,334,000
2169 Green St #2	2	2	1	1,800	7	8/3/2017	2,695,000	2,718,000
2100 Green St #406	2	2	1	n/a	90	8/8/2017	2,750,000	3,175,000
1662 Union St	3	3	1	n/a	53	7/28/2017	3,500,000	3,225,000

## Midsummer activity foreshadows autumn surge

Recent home sales activity in the neighborhood looked very similar to the midsummer of 2016 — and suggests that more local sellers will list their homes as the market heads into autumn.

There were 24 single-family home and condominium sales in Pacific Heights, Lower Pacific Heights, Cow Hollow and Presidio Heights between the middle of July and the middle of August, exactly the same number as last year. In 2016, 42 percent of properties sold for more than their original prices during the middle of summer; competition has increased recently, with 54 percent of homes commanding premiums this year.

Last year, home sales in the neighborhood grew by more than 50 percent during the period that followed, from the middle of August to the middle of September.

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



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BURLINGAME GREENBRAE NOE VALLEY PACIFIC HEIGHTS POTRERO HILL UPPER MARKET WEST PORTAL

BY CHARLES FRACCHIA

HE WAS BORN and grew up in public housing on Potrero Hill. When his parents could no longer take care of him and his brother, he was sent to a Catholic orphanage in Eureka. After a stint as a seminarian he attended St. Ignatius High School, where his Jesuit teachers noticed he could not read well, had his eyes checked, and bought him glasses.

It is a surprising start for what happens next. He attends the University of San Francisco and graduates with honors, does a stint as an officer in the U.S. Army, is given a Danforth Fellowship and attends Harvard University, where he receives a Ph.D. in American literature. Following a teaching stint at Harvard, he returns to San Francisco in 1973, where he becomes a special assistant to Mayor Joseph Alioto and City Librarian.

This protean figure is Kevin Starr, who, during the four and a half decades after his return to San Francisco, became one of the major cultural historians of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a journalist and editor, a generous abettor of many authors, an amiable clubman, State Librarian of California and a distinguished professor at the University of Southern California, to which he would commute weekly from his home in San Francisco.

His work will last for many decades. His several volumes of *America and the California Dream*, which has done for California what books by Van Wyck Brooks have done for New England, is a



Former State Librarian and prolific author Kevin Starr at his Franklin Street home.

## Historian Kevin Starr: A Personal Memoir

magisterial and monumental grappling with the idea of California — big ideas presented with creative insight and perspicacious analysis.

Even his throwaways, such as his book on the Golden Gate Bridge and a short history of California, showed his intense research and ability to evoke a scene.

The relatively unknown *Coast of Dreams*, an episodic look at California in the early 21st century, is a masterpiece. It will become one of the must-read books

on the state in a snapshot of time.

And then there's the recently published *Continental Ambition*, the first volume of a projected four-volume history of the Catholic Church in the United States. Alas, it is not to be. He jokingly said once that he had made a bargain with God to let him finish the four volumes. God had other plans.

It is astonishing that this productive and scholarly life had, as its counterpoint, a lively social life and an almost frenetic

club life: the Pacific Union Club, the Bohemian Club (where he was very active in Grove activities), the Olympic Club, the California Club. In addition, every evening and weekend held out social events, lectures he would give, and time with his family.

His condominium at the eastern edge of Pacific Heights and his spiritual home at St. Dominic's Church anchored him in sanctuaries of peace and contemplation.

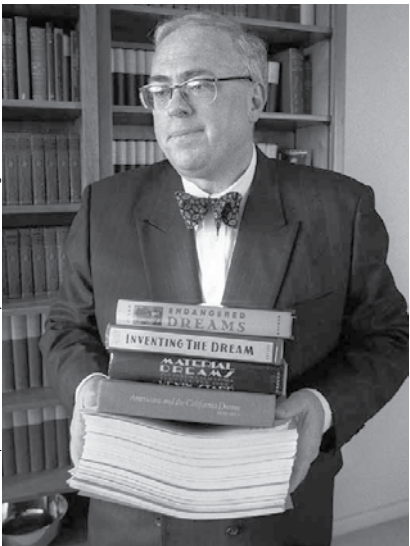
I knew Kevin since 1958, when he was a freshman and I a senior at USF. We took Latin and Greek classes together and had countless discussions. We were intimate friends for almost six decades.

He is one of three or four individuals I would want on my desert island. Kevin loved an audience and was never shy about using his stentorian voice to present monologues of his ideas. Despite being center stage, he was never boring.

One of the most heartwarming aspects of Kevin Starr was his love of people and his generosity to them. He would spend hours talking to people at the myriad of events he attended, agree to write forwards to their books or to make connections for them. It was hard to imagine this distinguished scholar, with his numerous honorary degrees and prestigious awards, being so kind to so many people.

San Francisco and the West lost a superb interpreter when he died earlier this year. The world of scholarship and his friends are bereft.

*Charles Fracchia, a neighborhood resident, is founder and president emeritus of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society.*



## Kevin Starr The Humanity of a Beneficent Scholar

Saturday, September 9  
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**William Deverell**, University of  
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SFMHS board member

**Mark Buell**, President, San Francisco  
Recreation and Parks Department

**Noah Griffin**, writer, composer, founder of  
the Cole Porter Society

**James Haas**, historian and author, SFMHS  
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**Carl Nolte**, writer, *San Francisco  
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