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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ FEBRUARY 2018



Viva Vivande!

Lessons learned in Carlo Middione's kitchen last a lifetime

► PAGE 8

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL BAHMANI

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FIRST PERSON



KATHRYN AMNOTT

Can Someone Explain This?

BY RALPH HARRIS

I'M STUMPED by the difference between girls and women. Yesterday I stopped in Starbucks on Fillmore to buy a bag of coffee. I picked out the beans I wanted and gave the bag to the teenage girl behind the counter, asking to have it ground for a drip coffeemaker. She turned to the other three girls working there and said she had never used the grinder before and asked if they could help her. They were not assisting other customers, but they each gave her a dirty look and moved away to busy themselves with something else. She looked at the machine but was uncertain about which dials and settings to use, so she asked them again. Each of them turned their back and pretended not to hear. So I spoke up and said I would appreciate it 18.1201 inif someone would help her because I'm a customer and would like to have this done correctly. One of them grudgingly walked over to the machine and, without speaking, just pointed here, here, and here, with a nasty look to the first girl. This "helper" then turned to me and said she could take my payment while the coffee was being ground. I had two gift cards, and asked if she could tell me how much was on each one. She looked around to the other three girls and asked how to use the scanner to do this. Again she got the same nasty look from each of them as the first girl did when she asked for help with the grinder. Each scurried away to remote areas. I left there thinking how mean teenage girls can be to each other. My mind drifted back to high school, when I saw similar behavior. Then in today's newspaper I read about four teenage girls in Pennsylvania who snuck some pineapple into the school lunch of another girl, knowing she had severe food allergies, especially to pineapple. The victim unknowingly ate it, fell extremely ill, was taken by ambulance to the hospital, and the four perpetrators were criminally charged. When my father passed away the amount of support my mother received from her friends and even distant relatives was incredible. Every day she received so many phone calls and offers to get together for lunch and other activities. I joked that she needed to hire a switchboard operator and an appointment secretary. She outlived my dad by 17 years, and the "girlfriend camaraderie" never stopped. She never needed to go to a formal grief support counselor or bereavement group; she had friends who would listen for hours and give encouragement when appropriate. I live in the Sequoias retirement community, three blocks east of Fillmore Street, and I see the same thing. Many of the women residents are woven into a close bond with one or more clusters of friends. I see groups of six, seven or eight have lunch or dinner — sometimes both — together every day. There are also tables of women who meet on a specific day of the week and have done so for many years. How does it happen that the unkindness often displayed by girls transforms into mutual solidarity and loving connection among women? I'm a guy, and I just don't understand these things.

THE NEW FILLMORE

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

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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Asmbly Hall opening a second shop on Divis

The dynamic duo behind Fillmore’s six-year-old **ASMBLY HALL** — mom and pop Ron and Tricia Benitez, with their sidekick young Harlow — have successfully crowd-funded a second store at Divisadero and Hayes, by the new Emporium brewcade. Tentative soft opening is set for February 15.

Their 1850 Fillmore shop has become both a fashion destination, offering what they call their “sophisticated prepster” styles, and something of a social center. Now preppers will meet hipsters in Nopa.

NEW FOOD OPTIONS: Interesting new dining possibilities are coming on the first three blocks of Fillmore south of Geary.

The Fillmore Jazz District will now be bookended by a pair of Korean restaurants, with both the **HOLLYWOOD GRILL** and the **FILLMORE SOCIAL CLUB** getting into operation. . . . The intimate multi-course tasting menus offered by top-notch chefs at 1552 Fillmore will evolve into **AVERY**,



a new permanent restaurant. . . . Farther south at 1365 Fillmore, look for the doors to open this month at **MERCHANT ROOTS** (above), which will offer both partially prepared meals to take home as well as special on-site dinners.

AND ET CETERA: Cobbler Ed Nahigian’s shoe repair shop at 2448 Fillmore is being replaced by a shoe store. . . . And a lease is said to be imminent for the **THAI STICK** at Fillmore & Pine.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



The now-shuttered space at 3060 Fillmore and Filbert was formerly home of Real Food Co.

A Grocery, Not Shake Shack

Neighbors make their preferences clear. Will it matter?

A BIG CROWD of neighbors showed up on January 24 to preview plans to bring a Shake Shack burger joint to the former corner home of Real Food Co. at Fillmore and Filbert.

But most said they prefer another grocery store in that location.

No one seemed to have a good word for Shake Shack, the hot burger chain headed by New York restaurateur Danny Meyer that is drawing long lines of fans to many of its 160-plus locations. Shake Shack is expanding into Palo Alto and Marin, and is looking for a San Francisco location.

Rumble Fitness, a boxing gym, would share the space.

Despite the demand, no one suggested there is much hope for a grocery store in the former corner garage, built in 1915, which is small and has limited parking. Neighbors got excited when Bi-Rite Market was rumored to be mulling a store there — incorrectly, as it turned out. The property owners say they have been able to find no other grocers who are interested, either.

“This is not what the Cow Hollow-Marina neighborhood needs,” resident Emily Scott said of the Shake Shack-Rumble combo, circulating a list of a dozen nearby places serving burgers and nearly three dozen fitness options. “What we do need is a grocery store,” Scott said.

Quick End to a Stickup at Sterling Bank

STERLING BANK at 1900 Fillmore was the target of an alarming, if ultimately unsuccessful, robbery attempt on January 16. It happened at 4:50 p.m., just before closing time.

Some inside the bank were aware of a man in a blue rain poncho pacing up and down the sidewalk in front of the small, glassed-wrapped bank, but at first no one paid much attention. Then the man entered the bank, confronting manager James Rensch. Covering his face with one hand and wielding a gun with the other, the robber told Rensch: “Give me all your cash or I’ll shoot.”

In accordance with bank instructions, “I complied,” said a clearly shaken Rensch. He said the man was in the bank for a tense three minutes before he fled with the cash.

Rensch called 911, and two plainclothes policemen, along with beat cop Gordon Wong, were nearby. The plainclothes officers chased the suspect up Bush Street and caught him just past Webster. The apprehension was witnessed by the bank’s neighbor, HiHo Silver shop owner Victoria Dunham, who was leaving her flat as the arrest unfolded outside her front door.

Police dispatch had given the officers a description of the man, but during his short flight he had managed to shed his clothes and don new ones. Although the suspect was arrested, the police investigation is still ongoing and the FBI is now involved.

— DONNA GILLESPIE

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Robbery
Webster and Fulton
December 20, 9:10 p.m.

A man got off the bus at Fulton and Webster with his phone in his hand. Another man came up behind him and snatched it away. The two struggled over the phone for a time, but eventually the robber prevailed and ran. The man who had lost his phone gave chase, and during his pursuit, a third man chased him and then pulled his backpack, which contained a laptop, off his shoulders. The suspects, both of whom were described as being in their mid-20s, fled on foot. The matter is still under investigation.

Robbery
McAllister and Laguna
December 23, 1 p.m.

A man was riding a bus and talking on his cell phone when a youth approximately 18 to 20 years of age pushed him from behind and snatched his phone. The robber then jumped out of the back door of the bus and fled. The robbery victim reported the matter to the police, who are investigating.

Burglary
Lake and 2nd
December 27, 5:46 a.m.

Officers received a call about a man who was breaking into a car. Police located the man and took him into custody. He told the police that he thought his girlfriend was stuck inside the car, and said he was trying to get her out. Several witnesses had seen the suspect break the car's window and reach inside to search though the property left there. After the officers found methamphetamine in

the suspect's pockets, he was booked into county jail on multiple charges.

Battery
Steiner and McAllister
December 28, 10:32 a.m.

Two officers were summoned to an apartment building to speak with a man who had been assaulted. He stated that he had been doing construction work in the building when one of the residents, who smelled strongly of alcohol, approached him and demanded that his unit be remodeled. The man working on the building advised the renter that he was not allowed in the construction area. The resident erupted into a rage. He poured his drink over the construction worker's head, then kicked him. The officers were unable to locate the suspect. The man who had been attacked refused medical attention. The matter is still under investigation.

Burglary, Forcible Entry
Divisadero and O'Farrell
December 28, 12:20 p.m.

On returning home, a man discovered the gate to his tool yard was ajar and the netting above the gate had been cut. An assortment of construction tools were missing. He called the police, who found several surveillance cameras in the area. They are reviewing the tapes and investigating further.

Burglary, Unlawful Entry
Lyon and McAllister
December 29, 7:20 a.m.

A man returned home to find his garage door open. His car was missing, along with many items stored in the garage. Two officers arrived and canvassed the area for surveillance cameras. They found two in the area and are reviewing the footage.

Reckless Driving
Turk and Scott
December 29, 1:41 p.m.

Two officers on patrol observed a vehicle spinning in circles in an intersection. The car then drove off. The officers caught up with the vehicle and carried out a traffic stop. They cited the driver for reckless driving.

Reckless Driving, Driving Without License
Arguello and Fulton
December 30, 11:01 a.m.

Officers spotted a silver Mercedes with tinted windows driving at a high rate of speed. When the driver saw the patrol car he sped up even more, entering the west-bound lane of Fulton and running the light at Arguello. The car struck another vehicle in the intersection, causing it to roll over. A family of four, including two children, was inside the car that was hit and all were transported to the hospital for treatment. Police detained the driver of the speeding car and discovered he did not have a license. He was booked on multiple felony charges.

Battery
Steiner and McAllister
December 31, 11:30 p.m.

Officers received a call about a battery. They met at his apartment building with the caller, who said he had offered an acquaintance a place to stay, but soon got into an argument with the man, and asked him to leave. The guest was infuriated and began shouting and throwing objects from the apartment. When the resident called 911, the suspect fled. The resident's arm was injured in the attack, but he refused medical attention. The incident is still under investigation.

Failing to Yield for Pedestrians, Firearms
Geary and 2nd
January 2, 6:36 p.m.

Officers observed a vehicle that failed to yield to pedestrians at an intersection. When they conducted a traffic stop, the driver handed them an expired license. A computer check revealed that the car had been involved in a strong arm robbery in Burlingame. Burlingame police responded to the scene. As they were taking the driver into custody, the passenger jumped out of the car and ran. Police pursued him on foot, and caught him after several blocks. Inside the car, the officers found a loaded Smith and Wesson handgun that had been left in close proximity to a child. The driver was released with a citation by the SFPD, then taken into custody by Burlingame police. The passenger was booked at county jail on multiple felony charges, including child endangerment.

Armed Robbery
Buchanan and O'Farrell
January 6th, 9:50 p.m.

A man waiting at an intersection was approached by three men in their early 20s; one was wielding a gun. They ordered the man to turn over his cell phone and ID. Then the suspects became agitated and fled before the man had a chance to comply. Police are investigating the matter.

Theft From Locked Vehicle
Geary and Presidio
January 16, 9:20 a.m.

A woman returned to her car to find the rear driver's side window had been shattered. She looked inside to see that everything she had left in the car was gone. She reported the theft to the police, who have no suspects at this time.



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Hogging All the Spaces

By Chris Barnett

Parking is tough enough in the neighborhood, but on a recent Monday, entire streets were plastered with city-issued “No Parking” signs threatening a tow job for any parking between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday. The signs are good for three months, virtually wiping out street parking. Yet there was no construction going on in the “construction zone.” Calls to one of the permit holders, Shaw Pipeline, plus the San Francisco Planning Department and the city’s Department of Parking and Traffic, all went ignored and unanswered. But at least **RODNEY FONG** — the only S.F. planning commissioner to put his personal phone number on the city website — feels our pain. He notices how the signs often “hog all the spaces” all day long while actual work may go on for only a couple of hours.

WORTH WAITING FOR: As we previewed in last month’s Beat, Wall Street’s muscular **BLACKSTONE GROUP** emptied the vault on design and details in the long, super-quiet \$32 million makeover of its **HOTEL KABUKI** in Japantown. Drinks in the spacious, just-opened bar and lobby lounge have the same creativity and Japanese authenticity in the glass, and are on a libational par with what’s poured in Tokyo’s most stylish and priciest watering holes.

Five unusual combinations of spirits and sodas are offered during a weekday 4 to 6 p.m. happy hour at \$7, almost half the normal \$13 tariff. The Nikka G&T is a refreshing twist on the English classic cooler, using imported Japan-distilled Nikka Coffey gin and Suze, a Japanese take on a French fruit liqueur and dandelion tonic. The Natsu Soda mixes vodka, sake and a watermelon flavor. Madame Chou mates tequila with pea flower tea. Imaginative tea and “luxury” cocktails, a sheet of sakes and some 20 Japanese whiskeys float above the \$20 range — and there’s a list of beguiling bar bites, including Okonomiyaki: cabbage, potato, ginger and bacon. None of the tastes are on the happy hour menu — yet — says barkeep **ARI TERRELL**.

A new operator and concept for the hotel’s restaurant is in the works.

HIDDEN JEWEL: The cozy Laurel Village branch of **FIRST REPUBLIC BANK**, with its chocolate chip cookies and bottomless coffee pot, tops Park Avenue in New York and 69 other First Republic offices nationwide with \$1 billion in deposits. Now the neighborhood is getting a dividend. Glasgow-born branch boss **NICK SIMPSON** is breaking through the walls to double the bank’s space, including three more sit-down teller desks and a *gratis* community room. Along with financial strategies, Simpson, a certified taster back in the homeland, also dispenses insights and advice on fine single malt Scotches.



The just-opened bar and lobby lounge in the Hotel Kabuki in Japantown.

BESTSELLERS COME AND GO: But manager **INGRID NYSTROM**, at the Laurel Village outpost of **BOOKS INC.**, and her long-tenured staff treasure the written word in a way that soulless Amazon can’t even digitally dream about. She says what’s flying off the well-stocked shelves at 3515 California Street is “everything Trump.” White hot is Michael Wolff’s *Fire and Fury*, as well as David Frum’s *Trumpocracy*. Also still high on the lists are tomes by San Francisco authors: Jennifer Egan’s *Manhattan Beach*, Amar Towles’ *Gentlemen in Moscow*, David Talbot’s *Season of the Witch* and Gary Kamiya’s *Cool, Gray City of Love*. Plus, Nystrom oversees one of the best magazine and newsstands in town.

A BEAR PROWLs THE ‘MO’? Word on the street is that a partner in the quirky, uber-popular, Michelin-starred Mission supper club **LAZY BEAR** was spotted quietly checking out the shuttered **THAI STICK** at the corner of Fillmore and Pine. Lazy Bear started as an underground pop-up by lawyer-turned-chef **DAVID BARZELEY**, who tells patrons where to sit and what to eat — and makes it tough to get in.

ALL LIT UP: The long-suffering historic sign heralding the **ELITE CAFE** has finally been repaired and restored to its place of prominence in the night sky above the boulevard. . . . Inside, **WILL HERRERA**, from **PALMER’S TAVERN** up the street, has signed on as the new G.M. to help oversee a slight food and drink retool to recapture some of the Elite’s legendary DNA.

The Beat goes on. Send sightings and newsy local items to chris@carnmedia.com.



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Welcoming signs in the studio read: “Paint. Drink. Have Fun!” I’ve always liked action verbs, so I continued to look around.

MAKE YOUR OWN MASTERPIECE

Bringing out the inner artist, one glass at a time

By NANCY JUBILER

ARE YOU A budding Picasso? Not me. I’m a baby boomer who never got past drawing stick figures in grade school. So when a friend invited me to a painting class at the new Pinot’s Palette at 1981 Sutter off Fillmore, I initially said no. When I found out they serve wine, I changed my mind.

We first met at Harry’s Bar a few blocks away to fortify ourselves before class — which was somewhat prescient. In the studio, a bachelorette party was already in the works. Six women in their 20s were inhaling tasty looking hors d’oeuvres they had spread out on a small table, but didn’t share. The rest of our classmates — about 20 in all — were couples or small groups of friends in a range of ages.

Welcoming signs in the studio read: “Paint. Drink. Have Fun!” I’ve always liked action verbs, so I continued to look around. The walls were covered with little masterpieces that others had already completed: paintings of animals, city streets and nature scenes, lined up one by one. All of them were a bit intimidating. But when my generous friend brought us confidence-building Malbecs, we toasted

and gamely put on our blue aprons. As music played in the background, everyone sat down behind an easel. Each place setting was equipped with three types of brushes, a cup of water and a paper plate filled with several acrylic paint colors, with a spare empty plate on top. There was a blank canvas on its small easel, ready to be adorned. I realized the only painting I’d ever done was at home, on singled-colored walls. I was fine with all this, I swear, until I saw a video monitor up front. It showcased “River Willow,” the painting we were all supposed to create. It was an outdoor scene with moonlight and shadows and frilly leaves and stuff. My psyche screamed: “Uh-oh.” Our teacher, Jeff Johnston, a real artist with a master’s degree, assured us we would be able to create this dark forest with a tree in bloom. One large tree branch held a thin swing. There was also a full moon on the top right-hand corner, casting shadows onto a shimmering pond. Johnston instructed us to follow him as he painted, step by step. When he began with: “First take your large brush and paint a black horizontal line,” I relaxed. We filled in the rest of the canvas with blue. Then Johnston told us to use our white plates to make an outline of

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Artist wannabes drink and paint during sessions at Pinot's Palette at 1981 Sutter.

the moon. At his direction, we mixed in some white and black paint and splattered some yellow dots, too. After I heard, “Take your smallest brush and streak in purples, yellow and black on the bottom right side,” reflections appeared in the water. My piece seemed to mature. And when we painted dark shadows on the bark, the painting became mine.

With only a couple of short breaks, Johnston encouraged us for three whole hours. He walked around, commenting on the masterworks in progress and offering gentle suggestions to the stumped. We all had a painting at the end of the class, each with a distinctive style. Some people had flowers that blossomed. Others had impressionistic globs. Most “River Willows” seemed free and light, but a few were dense and dark.

Pinot's Palette is a franchise, with approximately 150 studios nationwide and more to come. Eben Marsh owns the Sutter Street location. He's a former insurance salesman who lives in the neighborhood. He doesn't paint, but says he was attracted to the new business because it supports the community and the arts.

“Folks in the Fillmore are creative,” Marsh says.

Marsh attends Pinot's Palette sessions as the bartender, alongside his wife, Lauren. They serve up beer and wine for an extra charge, around \$10. No food.

Artist wannabes can sign up individually for a two-hour class for \$39, or a three-hour class for \$49, or book a private party or corporate event.



Painting sessions at Pinot's Palette are marketed as a “team builder” for corporate staff looking to bond. Only a few weeks after opening, Salesforce, StubHub, NextGen and Google employees had already attended classes there.

Pinot's currently hosts three or four sessions each week. There are also club memberships, with additional perks for students who are at least 21.

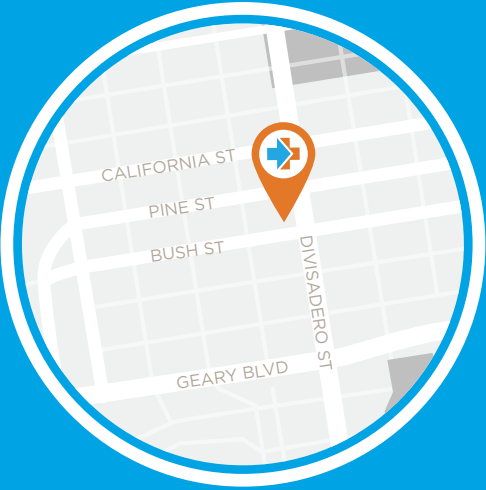
But parents needn't worry. Marsh plans

to go mobile and offer “Little Brushes” boot camps in addition to onsite private classes.

Henri Matisse said, “Creativity takes courage,” so I'm glad I went. But let me make one suggestion: Use the hair dryer to dry your artwork before you leave. My friend had splats of paint on her jacket and pants that couldn't be removed. She later had to throw the painted clothes away. But the painting was a keeper.

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Viva Vivande!

A gastronomical time machine, masquerading as a restaurant

BY CHRISTOPHER BRUNO

“Smell this!”

Carlo Middione said, as he thrust two handfuls of fresh, limp, uncooked spinach fettucine in my face.

I was the newest hire in the spring of 1985 at his gastronomical time machine, Vivande Porte Via, which masqueraded as a restaurant on Fillmore Street. I inhaled deeply and was shocked at the sweet, earthy smell of the uncooked strands. “*It smells like...*” Dare I say it? Am I crazy? Was this a test? “*It smells like...*” I looked at Carlo, unable to speak — and he burst out laughing.

He smiled at me with his bristling salt and peppered cheeks. It smelled like that vital life

force, that injection of sweetly salted humanity from which all humanity is spun, betraying the true nature of my new place of employment: *Vivande* comes from the Latin *vita*, meaning *life*.

Carlo pulled the pasta away from me and, stepping toward the blue-flamed burners that created a sunflower of flame below the pots that suffered metallurgically throughout the day, thrust the pasta into a cauldron of boiling water.

I had failed this test. And I had passed it. I could not say what I thought. And Carlo could not hide what the gods had created in the food that had become his calling.

The pasta was ready, all the gas jets had been ignited, his thin young chefs in their starched whites stood like soldiers before their burners, the tables had been set, the front door unlocked — and life was to begin again in the enclosed brick

alleyway that transported the culinary cognoscenti of San Francisco to the backstreets of Carlo’s Sicilian home.

And I, not yet graduated from Santa Clara University, but having returned from Ireland and seeking to become a novelist, was thrust into the pandemonium of Carlo’s one-man culinary revolution.

Carlo hired me to be his ombudsman — to greet his diners at the door, to help out in his fabled charcuterie, to assist the waiters with their wine orders, to give the busboys a hand during the rush. I had no job description and no real boss. I dove at anyone at the door who looked hungry and upsold them from take-out to “a quiet table in the back.” In fact, there were no quiet tables in the back at Vivande: The clank and clash and verbal

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We just arrived in Tucson for the gem and mineral show. This is where we connect with the designers we currently work with, search out new talent and poke around for all things wonderful. With 1906 now in the equation, our eyes will be open for new curiosities.

Cheers,
Victorian Dunham, proprietor

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and molten eruptions in the open kitchen wafted forward through the restaurants where two dozen tables-for-two kept diners nose-to-nose with their lunch dates and elbow-to-elbow with their neighbors.

The atmosphere was a factory of food. Mere comfort was cast aside in favor of cramming in as many people as possible who sought out Carlo's signature dishes: *Fettucine Carbonara*, with pancetta and parmesan; *Fettucine Salsiccia*, with house-made fennel sausage; *Fettucine alle Cozze*, with white wine and mussels; *Pasta Primavera*, with seasonal sauteed vegetables. And my favorite: *Straw & Hay* — intermingled angel hair pasta made of durum flour (straw) and spinach flour (hay), cooked with olive oil and lightly salted. It was never on the menu, as I recall, but could be whipped up on the spot if I correctly eyed the requisite pasta for the dish and requested one more fix *sotto voce*.

We were allotted one entree per shift, and I, who had grown up on vaporized zucchini and Hamburger Helper, was immersed in the taste and smells of Southern Italian food so authentic that Carlo's life's work would eventually be recognized with the Italian government's prestigious *L'Insegna del Ristorante Italiano* award.

Carlo once presented me with my daily meal, a warm oily dish with olives: *Pasta Puttanesca*, he called it with a smirk. "What does that mean?" I asked him, staring at the glistening steaming strands. Again he flashed that broad grin. "What does the word remind you of: *puttanesca*?" he asked.

Dare I say it? Am I crazy to make such a connection?

"They served it in the brothels," he finally informed me, and laughed, as always, turning once more toward his flames. I snuck downstairs and bolted down this new oily dish.

Leslie, a thin, dark-haired, almost waif-like manager — who took her job and my ambition very seriously — grabbed my arm: "*You just missed her!*" she said.

"Who?"

"Danielle Steel — there," Leslie said, turning toward the front door, "in the camel coat!"

I rushed through the restaurant, careful not to push Carlo's patrons, but accelerating as fast as I could through a Christmas crowd alternately eyeing the lunch menu and asking for samples of smoked chicken salad and eggplant sandwiches at the charcuterie.

There was no sign of the novelist at the front door, but I ran north, up Fillmore past Browser Books toward where I assumed she lived in Pacific Heights. I had never read any of her books, but she was so successful in mastering the alchemic art of transmuting life into fiction that perhaps just one meeting with her, one gaze into her eyes, or the sensation of her gloved hand in mine, would be enough to transmit her artistic capacity to me.

I ran another block up Fillmore in my zoot-suit black slacks, matching vest with a gold paisley silk backing and the Vivande trademark green-striped



"If the measure of a man is how he treats the least of his charges, no employer ever surpassed the manner in which Carlo Middione treated me."

— CHRISTOPHER BRUNO
at Vivande in 1985

apron that I wore when working in the charcuterie. No sign of her.

The famous came and went at Vivande. Carlo, to me, though, was the most famous of them all. I have a soft spot for kind men — and witty — as I was told my father was once just like that. If the measure of a man is how he treats the least of his charges, no employer ever surpassed the manner in which Carlo Middione treated me. It was like I had become family: the son and heir — a co-celebrant in the Liturgy of Linguine.

Vivande Porta Via was a place where the regulars vied for space not at the best table, but at the marble counter as close to the kitchen as possible. For it was there Carlo would come to take a sip of San Pellegrino and chat during whatever lull was afforded to him during the blitzkrieg of the lunch crush.

Evan White, for instance, manned that counter as if it were his anchor desk in the KRON studios, broadcasting his order with his "Moscow-in-Flames" baritone as though it were late-breaking news: "*Chris, we are going to start with the antipasta and still water, but more to come. Stay tuned!*"

I stayed tuned to him every time he dined. As I did to Ray Reddell, the famous rosarian from Petaluma, another counter-dweller, who demonstrated how a quiet man can make a lasting impression across the decades from within a restaurant loud enough to have required shouting at times.

"Leeza!" Patrique shouted once to Carlo's wife, Lisa — no doubt throwing his ever-present knit scarf around his neck at high velocity for effect. "*Leeza! Chreestopher has eaten the Reggiano!*"

There was a policy at Vivande that the staff was only to eat the domestic parmesan, but how could I allow Carlo's angelic offerings to be despoiled by the dandruff flakes of domestic parmesan?

Yes, I ate the Reggiano. I admit it. I ate without

concern of cost. I ate it often. Had Carlo asked me himself, I would have told him the truth. But with crazy *Pat-treek* waving his unfiltered cigarette at me, gesticulating at high volume as he Osterized with his fingers the soundwaves of the vowels he butchered, I lied. Worse, I ate the evidence. Actually, I bolted it down along with the pasta, just as I inhaled all the food Carlo and his chefs made for me. That one free entree per shift. Anything on the menu (within reason).

One of the diners caught my attention: a former classmate who had landed a job as a production editor at the Daily Diary of the American Dream — *The Wall Street Journal*. She would come in for lunch at Vivande to see me, dressed for work as though she belonged to a secretarial pool in the '40s. She would sit on a stool by herself at the back counter facing the baking station.

One day she suggested a movie: *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, which was playing up the street at the Clay. We went a few nights later and witnessed that love scene between William Hurt and Raul Julia, which, anatomically, I wasn't quite clear on. Afterward, I walked her to her car, parked outside the Del Mateo Apartments near the Marina Green, where I lived in a foghorn echo chamber of a third-floor studio apartment. That first kiss as the 22 made its long, lonesome U-turn at the foot of Fillmore resulted in more than 20 years of marriage and two beautiful children. I surprised them all with exotic tastes of the world I had discovered.

So life truly began for me at Vivande Porta Via — my life — the decisions I would make, the future I sought. It all began in the cacophony of sounds, the explosion of flame, the last secretive dregs with Jerome of wine bought but not drunk, and cigarettes shared with Leslie on the back steps of the restaurant in the dark.

It all started there for me.



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At the Vogue, Two Filmfests This Month

By Andrea Chase

FILM FESTIVAL season starts in the neighborhood this month at the Vogue Theater on Sacramento Street with two celebrations of cinema: The Jewish Film Institute’s Winterfest, and the return of the Mostly British Film Festival.

JFI Winterfest starts at the Vogue at noon on February 10 with *Operation Wedding*, a story that deserves to be better known, and one that parses the political uses of the words “hero” and “terrorist.” Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov tells the true story of how her parents came to Israel in 1970, courtesy of an empty jet hijacked from the Soviet Union.

Known as the Dymshits-Kuznetsov hijacking affair, the journey plotted by a group of dissident Soviet Jews was anything but straightforward. The documentary interviews not just Zalmanson-Kuznetsov’s parents, but also an ex-KGB officer, and offers vintage clips from both before and after the fall of the Soviet Union — all of which remind us of the plight of Jews under the Soviet regime and the extraordinary courage of ordinary people.

West of the River Jordan (1:30 p.m.) is as much a personal journey for acclaimed Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitai as it is a record of people attempting to live normal lives while caught up in the occupation of the West Bank. Scenes from Gitai’s 1982 documentary, *Field Diary*, are intercut with contemporary footage to show how little has changed in 35 years. Further context is provided with clips from other documentaries by Gitai, including his surprisingly intimate and candid



The Brits are back — with spirits

The annual **MOSTLY BRITISH FILM FESTIVAL** returns to the Vogue Theater from February 15 to 22 for its 10th year. Among the highlights are *A Fanatic Heart*, a documentary in which activist, musician and Nobel Prize winner Sir Bob Geldof (above) pays tribute to poet W. B. Yeats. The screening, on February 18 at 6:30 p.m., will be followed by a Q&A onstage with Geldof.

■ A spirited pair of films screens on February 17: *The Hippopotamus*, based on the novel by Stephen Fry (at 6:15 p.m.) and *Whiskey Galore*, featuring a deliciously eccentric Eddie Izzard (at 8:30 p.m.) A free tasting of fine Scotch will be offered between screenings.

■ The festival’s tribute to the British New Wave on February 19 includes 1966’s *Alfie*, Julie Christie’s Oscar-winning turn in 1965’s *Darling* and 1961’s *A Taste of Honey*, directed by Tony Richardson, which broke taboos about abortion and homosexuality. There’s a gin tasting, too.

Rabin. The juxtaposition between the powers that be on both sides — and the powerlessness of the inhabitants over the politics that determine their existence — is thought-provoking, maddening and illuminating. His informal roundtable with Arab and Israeli women makes

you wish they could be in charge for just one day.

It took the team behind *Seeing Allred* (3:30 p.m.) three years to convince their subject, legendary women’s rights attorney Gloria Allred, to agree to participate in the documentary. As it turns out, the timing couldn’t have been better. Known for taking on the cases of women charging sexual harassment long before the #metoo movement, Allred has always been a media presence and a cultural lightning rod — reviled by some, revered by others, but always able to grab camera time for her clients. The film traces her 40-year career, including the private reasons for her very public battles. More than a biography, it’s an inspiring look at how far we’ve come, and a call for action on how much more needs to be done.

Sam Hoffman’s *Humor Me* (6:05 p.m.) starts with a classic Jewish joke, one that sets the stage for the bitter-sweet comedy to follow. Jermaine Clement stars as Nate, a once-promising New York playwright whose bright future fizzled. When his wife leaves him for a French billionaire, taking their young son along for the posh ride, Nate finds himself broke, broken and living in his father’s guest room at the Cranberry Bog retirement community in New Jersey. It leads, of course, to an epiphany or two in this crowd-pleasing look at life, love and getting older. The scenes of Elliot Gould powerwalking with panache are worth the price of admission alone.

Shelter, by Eran Riklis, (8:40 p.m.) is an engrossing spy thriller with women protagonists. Ex-Mossad agent Naomi Rimon (Neta Riskin) is offered a “baby-sitting” job by her old boss. A Lebanese agent, Mona (Golshifteh Farahani, who was so divine in Jim Jarmusch’s *Paterson*) has been compromised and given plastic surgery to alter her appearance before she disappears into a safehouse with Naomi. Sleekly shot and beautifully acted, the emphasis is on motive, more than action, with an intelligent script that teases its audience about just how safe that house is, and just how much either woman should trust the other.

On February 11, the second day of Winterfest, films will be screened at the Alamo Drafthouse on Mission Street. For tickets and more information, go to jfi.org/winterfest-2018.



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Thursday, February 15th OPENING NIGHT
OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION
Jewish Community Center 3200 California St 5:30pm
Mad To Be Normal UK 2017 (106 min) 7:30pm

Friday, February 16
The Party UK 2017 (72 min.) 5:30pm

Joanne Froggatt Tribute
Film clips, onstage interview with Jonathan Moscone 7:30pm
A Crooked Somebody USA 2017 (102min) 8:40pm

Saturday, February 17
I, Daniel Blake UK 2016 (100 min.) 12 noon
Not Another Happy Ending UK 2013 (102 min.) 2:00pm
London Road UK 2015 (91 min.) 4:15pm
The Hippopotamus UK 2015 (98min.) 6:15pm
Tasting of Scotch Whisky 7:45pm-8:30pm
Vogue Lobby for ticket holders of Hippopotamus and/or Whisky Galore!
Whisky Galore! UK 2016 (98 min.) 8:30pm

Sunday, February 18
Allure Canada 2017 (105 min.) 12:30pm
The Carer UK 2016 (89 min.) 2:40pm
The Young Offenders Ireland 2016 (83 min.) 4:40pm
A Fanatic Heart Ireland 2016 (100 min.) 6:30pm
Onstage interview with filmmaker Bob Geldof
The Lodgers Ireland 2017 (92 min.) 8:30pm

Monday, February 19
Darling UK 1965 (128 min.) 4:00pm
Tasting of Hendricks Gin - a British Classic 6:10-6:45pm
Vogue Lobby for ticket holders of Darling and/or Alfie
Alfie UK 1966 (114 min.) 6:45pm
A Taste of Honey UK 1961 (101 min.) 9:00pm

Tuesday, February 20
The Death and Life
Of Otto Bloom Australia 2016 (85 min.) 4:00pm
Sweet Country Australia 2017 (113 min.) 6:00pm
Goldstone Australia 2016 (110 min.) 8:30pm

Wednesday, February 21
The Ones Below UK 2015 (87 min.) 5:00pm
Una UK 2016 (94 minutes) 7:00pm
Inland Road New Zealand 2017 (80 min.) 9:00pm

Thursday, February 22
Bodkin Ras UK 2016 (79 min.) 4:00pm
Hotel Salvation India 2016 (102 min.) 6:00pm

Thursday, February 22 CLOSING NIGHT
Journey's End UK 2017 (107 min.) 8:00pm
Closing Night Party, Vogue Lobby 9:50pm

TICKET INFORMATION

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Individual Tickets \$15 / \$12.50
Opening Night Tickets \$25 / \$20
Joanne Froggatt Tribute \$25 / \$20
Bob Geldof Event \$25 / \$20

Discounts go to members of San Francisco Film Society, Fromm Institute, San Francisco Neighborhood Theater Foundation and people 65 and over. Tickets available at mostlybritish.org and Vogue Box Office.

By Pamela Feinsilber

JUST BEFORE Helgi Tomasson moved to San Francisco — and to the neighborhood — to become artistic director of the San Francisco Ballet, he wound up a stellar first act as an acclaimed principal dancer with George Balanchine’s New York City Ballet.

In his 33 years here, Tomasson has turned a regional troupe into one of the most admired ballet companies in the world. The company’s 85th season showcases Tomasson’s skill in planning wonderfully varied evenings of story ballets and three-act programs of modern and neoclassical choreography — such as his own “On a Theme of Paganini,” beginning February 23.

Did you dream of leading your own ballet company?

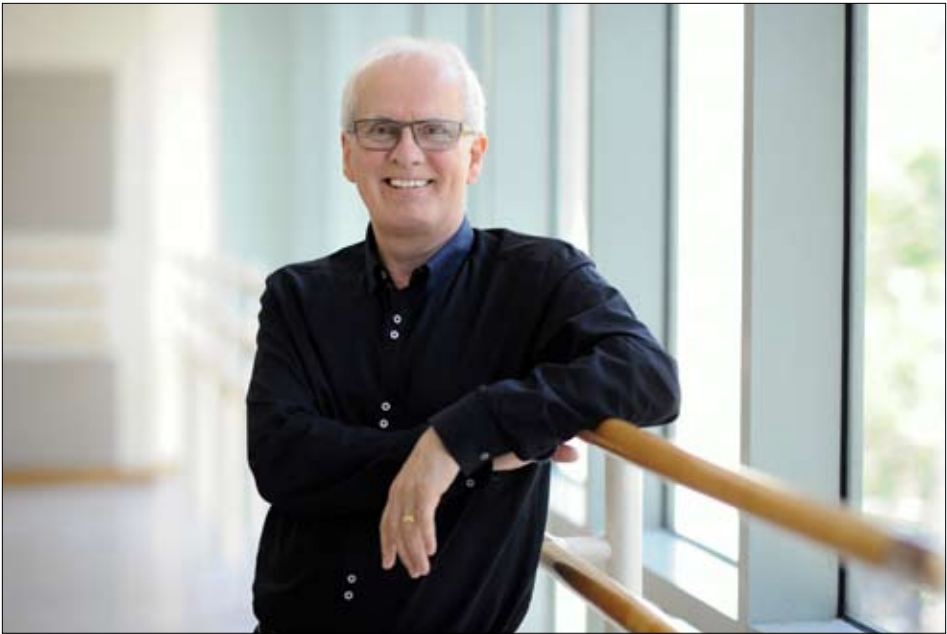
Probably like the majority of dancers, I was just concentrating on what we had to do and learning new ballets and touring. Until I was asked, I hadn’t really thought of it.

How did you get the offer?

I had been asked to take over the Royal Danish Ballet, and it looked like I would be going there. My wife and I were looking for housing in Copenhagen, but there were issues I felt the company needed to resolve. While we were waiting, I got a call from S.F. Ballet founder Lew Christensen, who asked me to come and have a talk with him, though he passed away before I could meet him.

Why did he think of you?

I had no experience in running a company, but I was one of the leading dancers



Helgi Tomasson has transformed the S.F. Ballet into an internationally admired troupe.

On a Theme of Helgi

Not in Copenhagen, but in Pacific Heights

of my generation, very well known not just nationally but internationally. Maybe they were looking for someone who understood the art form, but would also find new ways of using classical vocabulary. The S.F. Ballet board asked me to make this a nationally, even internationally, known company. I felt the level of the company needed to be better, and I set out to make that happen.

Were San Francisco, and maybe living in Pacific Heights, also draws?

I did not know the city very well. In the beginning of my career, I danced with Jof-

frey Ballet, which came through here once or twice, always a very short stay. When we were looking for housing for my wife and I and our two sons, it was hard to find anything. I just happened to walk into this apartment [on Washington Street], and it suited us well. It was only later that I discovered what a lovely neighborhood it is.

As a choreographer, do you find inspiration in working at home, with the hills and views?

You need to be in the ballet studio, with lots of space and the dancers in front of

you. Others think of a story and then try to fit the music to it, but most of my work derives from inspiration the music gave me. It’s a long process, because you listen to a lot of different music; I sit here in my living room. Once I find what I want to use, I play it over and over to get the structure and what I feel the composer had in mind, then what I want to do, how many dancers I want to use, which dancers.

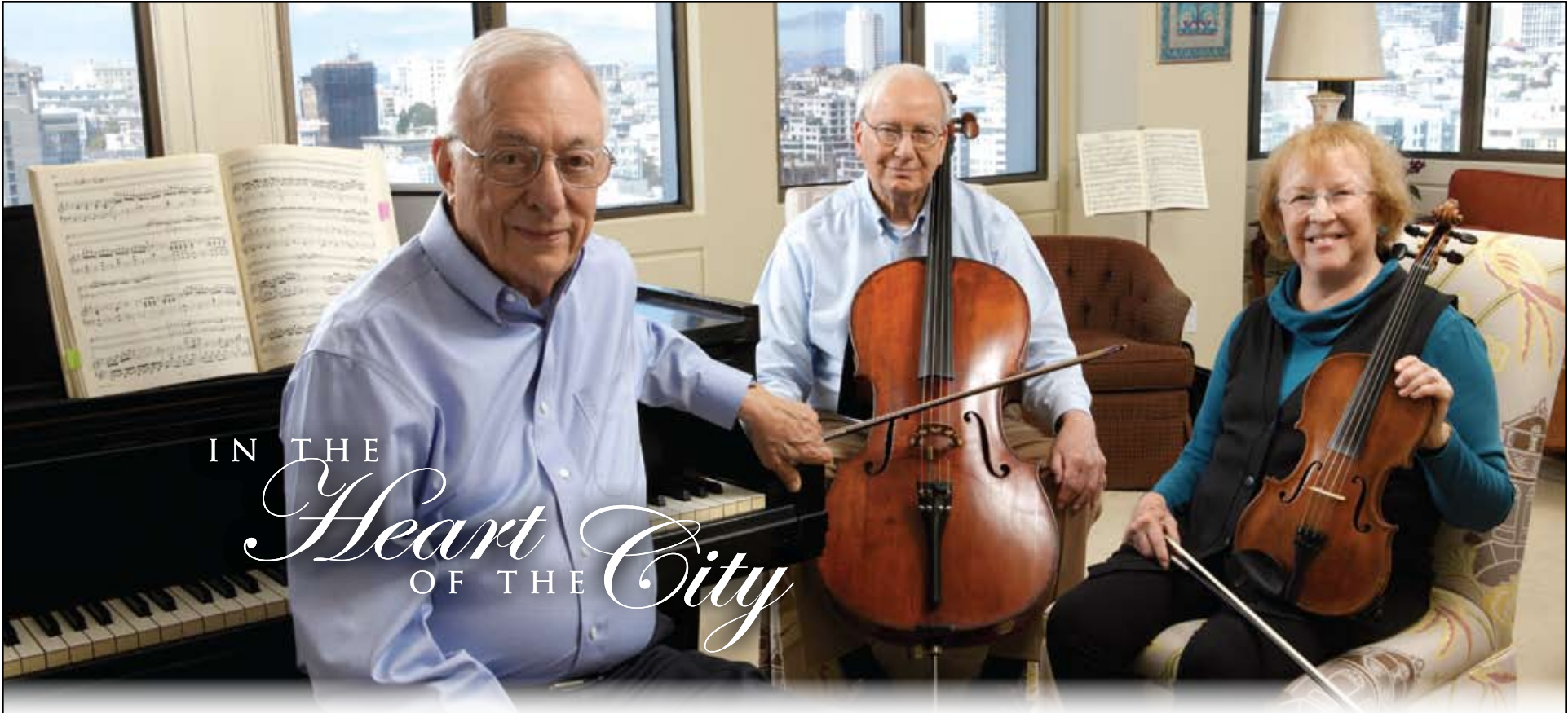
Walking around the neighborhood, do you run into patrons or balletgoers?

I love taking walks. Sometimes I walk all the way down to Bryan’s Grocery or Cal-Mart. There are people who come up to me unexpectedly — I might be waiting in line — and say: “Oh, by the way, I saw the performance last night and enjoyed it very much.” That happens a lot.

Quite a few years ago, I brought in 12 or 13 companies from around the world to dance their own work in a program called “United We Dance.” Since then, I’ve been asked so many times: “Are you going to do another festival like that?”

You are doing something special with “Unbound” in April.

Yes, it got me thinking what I would do different. This time, I contacted 12 choreographers. Some have established names; others are not known as well in this country. Maybe we could see where dance is heading. One choreographer might be in Copenhagen, another in Barcelona, in London. What if we got them all together? All the works in this program were created for this company. All 12 pieces are brand-new, never been seen, and created on these dancers.



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Above photo left to right: Demetri P., Michael L., and Paula M. enjoy the cultural atmosphere of The Sequoias.

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LANDMARKS



‘A PRETTY LITTLE COTTAGE’

And its neighboring gems

BY BRIDGET MALEY

AN ANOMALY in the neighborhood, the house at the southeast corner of Sacramento and Pierce Street, one block below Alta Plaza Park, has an unusual side elevation, lower-story porch and a curved front stair. It also has an equally intriguing history. Built for Frenchman and pharmacist Gaston Ernest Bacon and his wife, Kate, the residence at 2695 Sacramento Street was completed in 1894 by builder James J. Manseau; no association with an architect has been discovered. In 1875, Bacon was of one five men in the first graduating class of the California College of Pharmacy, now part of UCSF, the

first pharmacy college in the west. A native of France, Bacon immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1853. He married Kate Delora Perkins in 1884, and pursued a career as a druggist and later a trustee of the College of Pharmacy. Bacon’s sister Louise married a Frenchman, Jules Sorbier, a restaurateur, but divorced him in 1877. Madame Sorbier, as she was known, later became quite a philanthropist, an active suffragist and an advocate for keeping San Francisco’s cemeteries *in situ*. The Bacons traveled to France in 1890, with the *Chronicle* reporting: “Mr. and Mrs. G.E. Bacon are sojourning in Paris, where they will remain until the middle of August,

and will return to America on the steamship *Normandie* sailing from Havre on August 14th.” In September 1894 the *Chronicle* again had news of the Bacons, this time of their impending move to a new home: “Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Bacon have returned from the Santa Cruz mountains and will shortly occupy their pretty little cottage, corner Sacramento and Pierce streets.” The Bacon house, the last to fill out the east side of Pierce Street between California and Sacramento, joined a grouping of three distinct flat-front Italianate duplexes built in 1882 by Thomas Rendell at 2002-2012 Pierce. These unique buildings march up Pierce toward the mid-block Perine Place. Aptly described in the Junior League’s

Here Today as having a “prismatic crispness” and “uncompromising verticality,” the corner building at California Street has the most detail, including a bowed pediment at the entry. This architectural ensemble is remarkably intact. Between these three boxy 1882 duplexes and the Bacon house sit a pair of matching, two-flat dwellings at 2028-30 and 2034-34 Pierce Street. They appeared in 1887. These two Victorian-era gems have it all: fish-scale shingles, floral motifs, scrolls, spindles, decorative pediments and brackets — all capped with an inset sundial at the highest pediment. Rounding out this wonderful grouping is the Bacon house on the Pierce and Sac-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHAYNE WATSON

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A Talk by George McGraw, Founder of DigDeep

www.DigDeep.org

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Karen was appalled by my ignorance. She insisted I visit the Navajo Reservation to meet friends of hers -- families who struggle every day to get enough clean water to survive.


That trip changed my life, and DigDeep, forever.” - George McGraw

Join us as we listen to the founder of DigDeep, the recipient of this year’s Lenten Water Challenge, as he shares with us about how we can help those most in need, and change our thinking about water.




George McGraw wants to change the way you think about water. George runs DigDeep in Los Angeles, which he founded. DigDeep helps developing communities build and manage their own water utilities, while teaching young Americans to use their own resources more intelligently. In addition to its projects in East and West Africa, DigDeep is the only global water organization bringing clean, running water to communities in the U.S. -- where millions of Americans still don’t have it.






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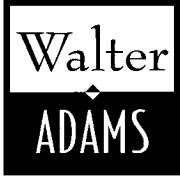
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Details abound in the grouping of Victorian houses on the 2000 block of Pierce Street.

ramento corner, with its unusual lower portico. Built into the hill along Pierce Street, the porch sits recessed under the main floor and above a decorative stone foundation. While the *Chronicle* described it as a “pretty little cottage,” this was a substantial house in its day. With a corner rounded bay and conical turret, varying shapes of wood shingles, applied swags, brackets and decorative floral frieze, plus a boxed bay at the side elevation, this house has a wonderfully quirky street presence.

The Bacons had no children of their own. A niece, Kate Ernestine Fiedler, was married to Laurence D. Allen at their home in September 1912.

In the early 1920s, the Bacons moved

to 8th Avenue, not far from the Parnassus medical campus, which housed the College of Pharmacy. They lived with their niece, who by then had divorced, until they died, Gaston in 1932 and Kate in 1938.

By 1933, along with several residential tenants, the Bacon’s Sacramento Street house held the Wright-Peters School of Dancing, which had been founded in 1912 by sisters Lenore Peters Job and Anita Peters, as well as Anita’s husband, Dexter Wright. The 1970 city directory indicates that Lenore Job, dance teacher, still resided in the house. By 1980, Quadricep, an exercise studio, occupied the house.

More recently, this corner gem has been returned to residential use.

■ UPDATE

Dustup over a pair of Coxheads

The side-by-side homes designed by esteemed architect Ernest Coxhead at the apex of Green Street, near Scott, are threatened by construction underway next door. The easternmost of the two houses, 2421 Green, was Coxhead’s own, designed for himself and his brother Almeric. [See “A Pair of Coxheads,” June 2017.]

In recent months, developer Chris Durkin has begun a project at 2417 Green, the house immediately downhill from Coxhead’s home. As the new year began, several stop work orders had been issued by the Department of Building Inspection and a controversy was brewing about the extent of work at the house, begun under different permits.

On January 9, the Board of Supervisors heard an appeal from neighbors and voted unanimously to send the project back to the Planning Department for further environmental evaluation.

“I can’t believe Planning would allow work to happen adjacent to an historic building without thoroughly analyzing the impact,” said then District 2 supervisor, now interim mayor, Mark Farrell. “There is



SHAYNE WATSON

Coxhead’s own home at 2421 Green abuts a disputed project.

evidence in the record the adjacent house is an historic resource.”

Farrell expressed dismay at the permitting process, noting that the 311 notice to neighbors had been mishandled and that the developer had completed work “beyond anything permitted.” Farrell noted that chimneys had been removed and admonished the developer for a pattern of bad behavior. He said the major expansion proposed at the rear of 2417 Green would impact the rear and side windows of the Coxhead house, which are among its more notable features.

Three neighbors — including U.S. 9th Circuit Judge Carlos Bea, who owns the landmark Casebolt House at 2727 Pierce, abutting the rear of the 2417 Green Street lot — and Philip Kaufman, the well-known filmmaker who now owns Coxhead’s house, have filed for discretionary review of the project. Bea and Kaufman spoke at the January 9 hearing.

Further exacerbating the controversy is the perceived “piece-mealing” of the project under several different permits, an approach criticized as a “get-around” that is increasingly being used by developers across the city.

— BRIDGET MALEY

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Dinner à la Heart

AgeOn.  Institute on Aging

Uniting two of San Francisco's favorite qualities: good food and a giving heart.

Dinner à la Heart gives Bay Area residents an opportunity to choose a restaurant, make reservations through Institute on Aging, and enjoy a unique dining experience while supporting seniors in need. Treat yourself and invite your friends to an exclusive prix-fixe dinner, including wine and coffee or tea, and help our seniors remain independent and healthy.

Lunch à la Heart.

Gather your friends and dine out for a cause at lunchtime!

For reservations and additional information, call 415.750.3443

or visit www.ioaging.org/dinneralaheart

Participating restaurants include:

3rd Cousin, All Spice (San Mateo), Barbacco Eno Trattoria,

Buckeye Roadhouse (Mill Valley), Boulevard, Bungalow 44

(Mill Valley), Chez Marius, Delfina, Ecco (Burlingame),

EPIC Steak, Farallon, Fringale Restaurant, Garibaldis, Gary Danko,

Hayes Street Grill, Harris' Restaurant, Il Fornaio (Corte Madera,

Palo Alto, San Francisco, San Jose), Izzy's Steak & Chops,

(San Carlos, San Francisco), Jason's Restaurant, Le Central Bistro,

Le P' Tit Laurent, Locanda (Wed.), Marin Joe's, Monsieur Benjamin,

One Market, Pane e Vino Trattoria, Perbacco, Piperade,

Poggio Trattoria (Sausalito), Puerto 27 (Pacifica), Regalito Rosticeria,

Roka Akor, Roti Indian Bistro, Sam's Grill & Seafood, Sessions,

Sixto's Cantina (Burlingame), Sushi Ran (Sausalito),

Swan's Oyster Depot, Trader Vic's (Emeryville), Venticello Ristorante

(Wed.), Waterbar, Waterfront Restaurant & more!



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Medication is distributed in compliance with Prop 215 and SB 420, regarding medical cannabis laws and regulations. May only be legally obtained by qualified medical cannabis patients with a valid recommendation from a licensed CA physician.



Living Well With Assistance.SM

Our Lower Pac Heights address offers everything we could want in a neighborhood. Plus, with staff, services, and fantastic food, it's easy to see why Rhoda Goldman Plaza is The City's unsurpassed assisted living and memory care community. For your personal visit, connect with Candiece: 415.345.5072 or CandieceM@rgplaza.org.

2180 Post Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

Founded by Jewish Family and Children's Services and Mount Zion Health Fund RCFE# 385600125



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