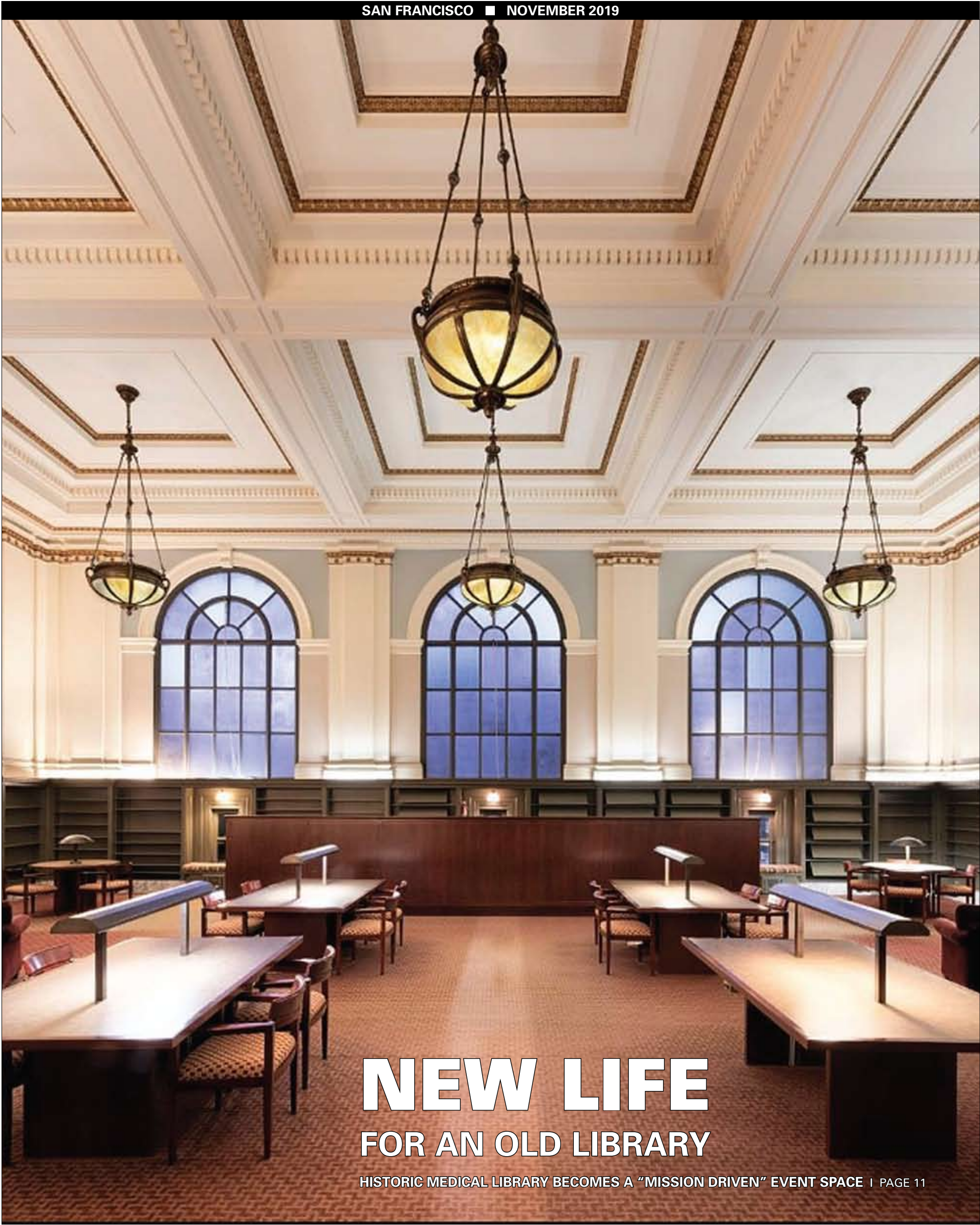


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THE NEW FILLMORE



SAN FRANCISCO ■ NOVEMBER 2019

NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD LIBRARY

HISTORIC MEDICAL LIBRARY BECOMES A “MISSION DRIVEN” EVENT SPACE | PAGE 11

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CORRESPONDENCE

EARTHQUAKE STORIES

I CAN NOW TELL THIS STORY. During the 1989 earthquake, I was manager of the Wells Fargo branch at Fillmore and California Streets.

We'd had a gas line explosion in the neighborhood earlier that day, which knocked out the electricity for several hours. I was frustrated because I had a pile of loan applications sitting on my desk and I couldn't work on them — because with no computers, I had to spend my day with the tellers manually approving cash disbursements.

At 4 in the afternoon, the electricity came back on. I was thrilled. Normalcy didn't last long. At 5:04 all havoc broke loose. I thought the gas lines had exploded again. They hadn't; it was an earthquake. I was picking customers up from the floor.

I secured everything at the bank. We stayed open until 6 with no lights, alarm or computers. The next day at 7 a.m. I left my house on Lake Street and walked to California Street to take the bus to the bank. But no buses were running. Tiger Wong, grandson of one of the founders of Chinatown, was driving down California Street and gave me a ride.

I opened the bank at 9 with no lights, computers or alarm. I put a sign in the window: "Will cash any bank's checks for \$100." We cashed 6,000 checks that day. No other bank in San Francisco was open and all ATM machines were down.

Years later, when I no longer worked at Wells Fargo, a woman walked up to me in the Financial District and said: "You don't know me, but I know you. The day after the earthquake, I needed cash, and you cashed my check for \$100. I will never forget you. Thanks."

BOB TERRY

MY SHOP, DEPARTURES FROM THE PAST, was next door to Harry's Bar. I had just moved in the year of the earthquake.

When it hit, and the electricity went off, the guys from the kitchen at Harry's went outside to their car parked in front and turned on the radio. Then we looked out toward the Marina, and a great plume of smoke was rising.

Harry Denton put candles all around that mirrored bar, and it was hazy from the smoke. He said the bar was closed, but let regulars in.

And through the beer and smoke, who was there? Gov. Jerry Brown. He was staying in the neighborhood sometimes.

No, he didn't bring Linda Ronstadt along. I won't forget that day and night.

STEVEN SPIGOLON

RE "TRIBES IN THE GROVE" in the Fillmore Beat by Chris Barnett, October: It's obvious you just can't help yourself and seem to have to politicize everything you write. It's people like you who continue to segment our society and perpetuate dividing people by inserting "identity politics" into everything.

I thought you were going to write that these three Native American women, recently hired and now working at The Grove, were contributing special recipes from their various tribes or background. Nope, you had to add your personal bias about how bad the U.S. treated the Indians.

For your sake, I hope these three servers wear name tags so customers know they are "special" from other servers who are working equally hard.

WILLOW CARTER

RE "COLLECTOR MEETS CURATOR" by Barbara Kate Repa, October: Thank you for developing the idea that our exhibition "Indonesian Textiles & Handcrafts" at Rhoda Goldman Plaza was more than the coincidence of a collection of textiles available to hang and the availability of someone who happened to know how to display them: that the exhibition afforded the opportunity for two new residents to meet, get to know each other, and for the Rhoda Goldman community to get to know two new residents.

So many people have, or will be, faced with such major life-changing situations. I for one was pleased that you shared the concept that sometimes unexpected events provide unexpected results.

SANDY ROSENBAUM

WE LOVE YOUR NEWSPAPER. I was astonished and very happy when I saw the September 2019 issue with one of my favorite authors, Richard Rodriguez, on the cover. As always, his article was excellently written. We have crossed paths a few times since 1982 and, like Richard, we live on Clay Street (since 1975) and we love this area very much.

I don't usually write fan letters, but I did want Richard to know how much I like his work. Could you please pass this letter on to him?

SANDY BRIGGS

THE NEW FILLMORE


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Connecting the neighborhood

Every month since 1986, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore have circulated to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and welcome your ideas and suggestions.

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A Jewel of a Club Is Closing

Pacific Heights Health Club, once for men only, ends its 35 year run

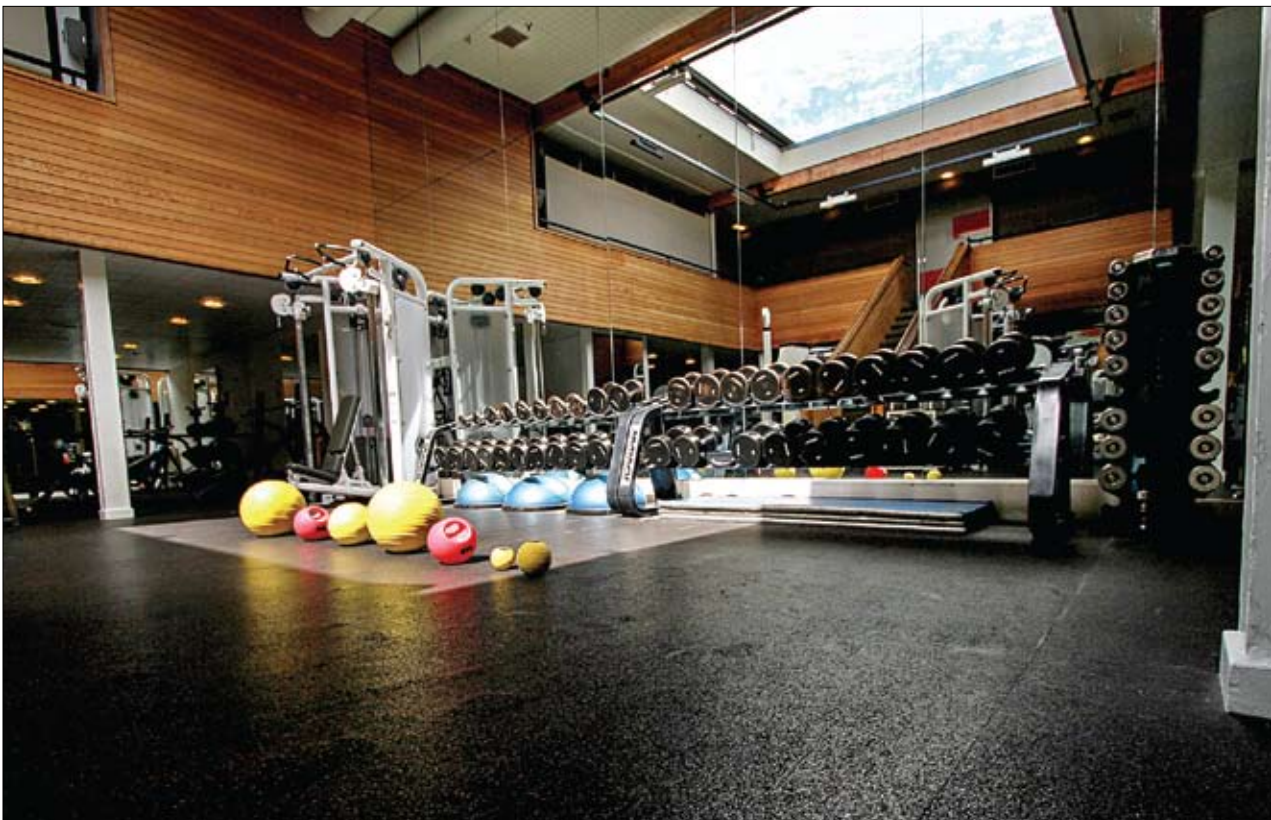
By BARBARA KATE REPA

PACIFIC HEIGHTS HEALTH CLUB, with its lofty-sounding name and low-key vibe — where designer workout garb was not required — will close its doors for the last time on November 27, the day before Thanksgiving, at precisely 3 p.m.

Amy Lang, who took ownership of the club 15 years ago and appointed herself chief motivating officer, announced the move in a letter to members on November 1.

“San Francisco has changed. Retail has changed. The fitness industry has changed,” Lang said in an interview.

The club’s personal training program will continue in the fitness center of the nearby 2000 Post Street apartments, between Steiner and Pierce.



A retractable roof in the weight room has been one of the club’s distinctions, along with its cheeky signs posted outside.

Lang intends to focus, mostly in online sessions, on coaching women from 45 to 55 interested in weight loss — especially those in tech, who share her work roots.

A longtime neighborhood institution, the urban gym at 2356 Pine, just west of Fillmore, has gone through a number of incarnations. It opened in 1984 — when the city had only six health clubs — as a men-only club that offered massages, a hot tub, and was staffed with locker room attendants. It was frequented by a number of celebrity clients, including, for a time, John F. Kennedy Jr.

David Kirk opened the front part of the club to women when he took ownership in 1990. A dozen years later he opened the entire club to all.

Fleeing a worklife in finance and tech, Amy Lang took

over as owner in 2004, adding a cheeky sense of marketing along with yoga, Zumba and Pilates classes. Later she discontinued the classes and focused on small group training for older people, a change that didn’t sit well with some of the regulars.

“It created a bit of a kerfuffle,” Lang acknowledges, but also revealed a deeper truth. “It was then that I realized the club is a better place for a person who is a do-it-yourself type of exerciser,” Lang says. “I didn’t know you don’t morph a health club into what you want it to be. But what I’ve learned now allows me to do what I’ve always wanted to do.”

Lang also admits it’s freeing to be untethered from the responsibility of owning and maintaining the 7,221-square-foot club and its various equipment.

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**Possession of Firearm, Methamphetamine
Bush and Larkin
September 6, 1:13 a.m.**

Officers saw a gold Lexus sweeping across two lanes of traffic in front of them without signaling. The officer who was driving had to apply the brakes to avoid a collision. They noted that the car’s registra- tion had expired.

The officers conducted a traffic stop and learned the driver was on probation in a felony stalking case and there were two out- standing warrants for his arrest. They found methamphetamine hidden behind his belt buckle. A search of his vehicle yielded a black Springfield XD-45 firearm under the driver seat; it was loaded, and within the driver’s reach. Officers then searched the trunk and located a mesh bag containing one white rope, one yellow rope, one roll of black tape and one mask. The suspect was booked on numerous charges.

**Hot Prowl
Chestnut and Gough
September 9, 10:01 p.m.**

A woman returned home to find her garage door open. Several items were mis- placed. At first she thought her husband was responsible, but when she went inside, she found a man sitting on her couch. She shouted for him to get out, then told her son to leave the house and call for help.

She took photos of the intruder before waiting outside for the police. Investigating officers conducted a walk-through of the house and back yard. They opened a door in the back of the house and looked in with a flashlight. The suspect was crouching inside. The officers placed him under arrest.

**Trespassing, Auto Theft
Sacramento and Octavia
September 23, 9:40 p.m.**

A building manager heard banging noises and found a man who appeared to be tampering with the door of the apart- ment building, attempting to gain entry.

When the manager shouted at the intruder, he fled on foot. The manager then called the police and provided a descrip- tion to dispatch. Shortly afterward, wit- nesses called 911 to report an auto boost in progress. The witnesses’ description of the suspect matched the manager’s description of the man who had tried to break in to the building. Numerous officers responded to the call, and searched the surrounding area. They located the suspect a few blocks away at Octavia and California and detained him. He was arrested without incident.

**Theft of Vehicle, Parole Violation
Broderick and Oak
September 25, 9:08 a.m.**

Officers received a call about a man who

had been sleeping inside a car in a parking garage since 4 o’clock that morning. They conducted a well-being check and found the man still asleep in the driver’s seat with the engine running. They woke him up to determine whether he was in distress and learned he was on probation. He stated that he did not know whose car it was. Additional officers visited the vehicle’s reg- istered owner’s home. The owner did not know the man and believed his car was still parked in front of his home. The sleeping man was arrested and booked for parole violation and vehicle theft.

**Carjacking
Pierce and O’Farrell
September 25, 11:30 p.m.**

Three men approached a woman at gunpoint near Kimbell Playground and demanded she hand over her car. The men were described as in their 20s. The car was later recovered, but no arrests have been made and the investigation continues.

**Carjacking
Clay and Presidio
October 5, 6:49 p.m.**

A man delivering packages spotted an unknown individual getting into the driv- er’s seat of his car. He ran to his car and grasped the window to keep the man from driving off. The suspect elbowed him sev- eral times to knock him off, and eventually he let go and rolled onto the ground. The thief sped away in the stolen car. He has not been located, and police are still inves- tigating the matter.

**Burglary
Sutter and Baker
October 9, 2:36 a.m.**

A homeowner’s dog started barking in the night, so he checked to see whether anyone was in his back yard. He spotted an unknown individual behaving in a sus- picious manner and called the police. As the officers arrived, they saw a man emerge from a neighbor’s house carrying a bicycle.

Police talked to the neighbor, who iden- tified the bike as his own. Officers detained the suspect and discovered that he was car- rying burglary tools along with narcotics paraphernalia. He was arrested and booked at county jail.

**Burglary
Fillmore and California
October 10, 8:09 p.m.**

A burglary abatement team was work- ing in plainclothes when dispatch advised them that two people in a red SUV had just broken into a gray Land Rover and was heading north on Fillmore. A few minutes later, officers spotted the SUV and conducted a felony stop. They ordered the

driver to turn the engine off, but he did not comply. Officers then approached the vehicle and ordered the occupants out of the car. A witness identified the SUV as the one involved in the burglary of the Land Rover. Officers determined that the SUV’s license plate had been stolen from a Toyota in Sunnydale. The suspects were placed under arrest.

**Assault
Van Ness and Pine
October 12, 2:10 p.m.**

A man sitting in his car in a gas station was confronted by an individual wielding a broken bottle and demanding money. When the driver refused and attempted to get away, the man hit him in the hand with the broken bottle and ran. The driver jumped out of his car and chased the sus- pect while calling 911. Responding officers spotted the suspect standing in front of BevMo. He fought the police as they tried to detain him but after a brief struggle, they got him into handcuffs. He was arrested and taken to county jail.

**Robbery, Assault
Laguna and Union
October 13, 2:47 a.m.**

A woman walked from a bar to her home and discovered she was unable to unlock her door. She fell asleep on her doorstep and was approached by an individual who assaulted her and stole her wallet. The assailant ran off and the woman flagged down a passerby, who called 911.

Three days later, at 4:30 in the morn- ing, a second woman was walking down Fillmore near Lombard when a man approached her from behind and assaulted her. He covered her mouth when she tried to call for help. A passing truck startled her attacker, allowing the woman to break free from his grasp. She alerted the first person she encountered, who called 911.

On the following day, at 4:32 in the morning, the officer who wrote the report for the assault of the night before spotted a suspicious vehicle parked at Steiner and Pixley. A man was sleeping inside. The officer realized that the man matched the physical description given by the victim of the second assault. When he searched the vehicle he found the stolen wallet that belonged to the woman who had fallen asleep on her doorstep. Special Victims Unit investigators responded to the scene and the man was arrested.

**DUI, Collision
Divisadero and Hayes
October 13, 10:30 p.m.**

Officers received a call about an acci- dent at an intersection resulting in injuries. On arrival they saw that three vehicles

were involved: one with major damage and one with minor damage, as well as the car responsible for the collision. They also noted that trees growing in the median strip had been knocked over. Officers spoke with the driver who caused the accident and learned that he had been drinking and taking pills. He was highly agitated when they interviewed him and did not seem to know where he was. The officers could not administer the field sobriety test because the suspect passed out during the question- ing, so they obtained a search warrant to give him a blood test.

They then spoke with one of the drivers whose car had been struck, who reported he had seen the suspect driving erratically before the accident. When the suspect ran a red light, he had a head-on collision with another vehicle. The driver who had been struck was taken to the ICU with life- threatening brain injuries. The suspect will be booked when he is released from S.F. General.

**Making Threats, Outstanding Warrants
Pine and Presidio
October 22, 9:18 p.m.**

A woman was walking her dog when a man approached and started shouting at her, saying that she was “a bitch” and that he was going to shoot her. The woman ran from him and called the police.

Officers located the man nearby. The woman who was threatened said she had feared for her life and believed the man intended to harm her. A records check on the suspect revealed several outstanding warrants for his arrest. He was booked at county jail.

**Aggravated Assault
Bush and Polk
October 26, 1 a.m.**

A patron of McTeague’s Saloon pushed a woman from behind and a physical fight broke out. The altercation ended when the man broke a glass bottle against the wom- an’s face.

Witnesses called the police. Upon arrival, officers located the victim of the assault, who was bleeding profusely. She corroborated the story told by the two wit- nesses. One witness directed the officers to the suspect. As they attempted to gain his attention, he fled from the bar. Officers gave chase while requesting backup. An arriv- ing unit cut off the suspect’s escape, and officers on foot caught him and detained him.

The woman who had been struck identi- fied the man who attacked her, and he was placed under arrest. Officers later spoke with the woman’s doctor, who stated that, although her injuries were not serious, she will have permanent scars on her face.



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Fillmore: Retail Mecca?

By Chris Barnett

DESPITE THE FIERCE turnover among well-heeled retailers, is Fillmore Street still Mecca for merchants? **JON LEVY**, an exec with Leap — a New York-based firm that creates and launches traditional retail stores for web-based digital brands — is convinced of it. He just snapped up a second storefront on the street for a client and is gunning for a third — all in the same block.

Leap just soft-opened the women’s fashion shop **ADAY** at 2011 Fillmore, after the cosmetic emporium **MAC** vanished suddenly last month. A few months earlier, Leap opened **KOIO**, a hip sneaker company, a few doors north at 2029 Fillmore in what was previously the **LILITH** women’s boutique. Now Leap has its sights on the space nearby at 2033 Fillmore being vacated by **MODCLOTH**, the Walmart-owned apparel startup that flopped as a brick-and-mortar venture but lives on online.

Leap is neither an angel investor nor a venture capitalist. Its gig: Match online retail concepts with hot locations nationwide and get them off the brick and mortar launching pad. And even with the high casualty rates on Fillmore among solidly financed, often globally owned retailers, Levy feels the street has an irresistible appeal to tech-smart, savvy-spending millennials who aren’t afraid to disrupt rules and flout traditions.

Levy maintains that **ADAY** is aimed at the “fashion forward yet practical” woman who looks for simplicity and versatility in her wardrobe. “This is comfortable yet technical apparel — think high-end fabrics made of recycled materials,” he says. The premise is that customers can wear the same outfit to work, a party, a job interview and a club. “These buyers are found in cities like San Francisco, L.A. and New York,” he adds. “The place to be for retailers targeting those buyers is on Fillmore. Just look at Noosh. Filled. That’s our market.”

Levy, who kicks off all his new store grand openings with a music, food and drink party and invites the neighborhood — none of those “friends and family” insider-only private bashes — is doing the same with **ADAY**. Mark your calendars for November 9. A do-good shopping incentive: 10 percent of all proceeds will be donated to the California Fire Foundation to aid in wildfire relief.

Meantime, no sight yet of actress **GWYNETH PALTROW** and her wellness lifestyle store **GOOP**. The star has leased the vacated **JIGSAW** fashion space at 2120 Fillmore to make permanent the pop-up she tried out last year a block north by the Clay Theatre.

NO LONGER ELITE: Dragged-out negotiations between **ANDY CHUN**, who held the lease on the now-dark **ELITE CAFE**, and serial restaurateur **ADRIANO PAGANINI**, have finally been resolved, sources say. The new owner of the iconic Fillmore storefront, **RICK HOWARD** — who also owns **HARRY’S BAR** across the street — would like to strip off some of Chun’s black paint and restore the building’s original Art Deco facade.



ADAY has just opened at 2011 Fillmore.

The nagging question: Is there a recipe for resurrecting the excitement and energy that once made this fabled Fillmore Street address a destination for the neighborhood and beyond? Look for — but don’t bet on — a January 2020 opening.

WE HARDLY KNEW YE: Walmart’s attempt to market high and cool fashions to XXS to 4X-sized women, **MODCLOTH**, is having a 40 percent off store closing sale at 2033 Fillmore Street. Its retail concept was gutsy: Touch and feel — and try on — the merchandise in the store, then have it FedExed to you, with nothing to buy and carry out and no immediate gratification. The store, billed as a “fitshop,” opened with fanfare last year, but now staffers have been instructed not to give details about the demise of this location, or the two others in New York and Washington, D.C. ModCloth as a brand will live on at modcloth.com.

AT THE CROSSROADS: Some muscular corporate-owned fashion chains are folding their Fillmore tents, but one homegrown entry is standing and strong. **CROSSROADS**, at the corner of Fillmore and Bush, is celebrating its 28th year and has spawned a nationwide chain of retail offspring. Like so many others, Crossroads bills itself as a “sustainable fashion” shop. But the difference between it and Goodwill or the other pre-owned stores is that it buys men’s and women’s clothes and re-sells them at a profit, says manager **MARISSA WILLIS**.

NOOSH NEWS: Bar boss **ANDREW MELTZER** is taking a break — for an entire year — to roam the world in search of new cocktail ideas. Tough duty. . . **NOOSH** co-chef and partner **SAYAT OZYILMAZ**’s recent lunch for his crew: 21 pizzas, with different toppings, from new neighbor up the block **APIZZA**. The bill for all those pies? Only \$117, including a 10 percent good neighbor discount.

The Beat goes on. Send newsy local items to chris@cbarnmedia.com or call 415-921-5092.

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Organic forms and abundant greenery mark Plants and Friends at 1906 Fillmore, the second shop of its kind created by Nick Forland.



A Tiny Plant Store on Tony Fillmore

By Thomas Reynolds

A NEIGHBOR, out for a walk one night soon after Plants and Friends opened its new shop at 1906 Fillmore in early October, stopped to admire the greenery in the window.

“It’s fun,” she said to another neighbor walking by. “It makes you smile.”

And so it does. Who would think — in the age of international fashion boutiques and cosmetics salons — that a tiny plant store could sprout on tony Fillmore Street?

Owner Nick Forland, that’s who. Suggest to him that he’s a dreamer for opening a petite plant store in a high-rent district and he seems completely surprised anyone could think he’s taking a risk.

“We’ve made a plant store work for two years in Hayes Valley,” he says with a toothy grin. “We had a test run.”

■

Forland and his collaborators created the first Plants and Friends shop in 2017 at 542 Laguna Street, just off Hayes, in an even smaller space. A photographer and “experiential designer,” Forland had become entranced while landscaping his own place in the Outer Sunset.

As a result, he became interested in “plants for city living” for people who don’t have the time or space for landscaping, yet want to connect to nature.

Already he and his friends are finding the new Fillmore shop attracts a much different clientele than the original Hayes Valley store.

“Hayes Valley is young — a lot of apartments with people just moving to the city,” says operations manager Harmony Corelitz. “We’re here to show we’re adults, too.”

Forland says that after he signed the lease for 1906 Fillmore — formerly an art gallery and an adjunct to the next-door jewelry shop HiHo Silver, among other things — he went across the street for a burger at Roam and marveled at his good fortune.

“Fillmore is just such an old street,” he says. “I can’t believe I’m on this street known around the world. It’s a different feeling. You just get so many people walking Fillmore.”

Naturally friends helped create the stylish and organic look of the shop.

“I wanted to replicate the feeling of being consumed by plants,” Forland says. His friend Lea Saito, an interior architect, came up with the forms of the display shelves. A welder friend created the bracketless powder-coated steel shelves. Artisan friends from New York plastered the walls the color of a blushing peach.

“It creates some beautiful effects — especially the shadows if there’s a plant in the window,” says Forland.

“Plants are not rectangles. We were trying to create more of an organic flow to the space.”

The new shop has more pots on display, many from local ceramicists, as well as refillable sacks of potting soil and fertilizer. There also are plant-based body products.

“There’s a little more breathing room,” says Forland.

And they’ve already been asked to provide plants and living walls for several local businesses.

“It’s been going well,” Forland says. “We’re like the new kid in school. Everybody has been so welcoming and friendly — every day someone new comes in.”

■

He finds some irony in the fact that plants are now trending online.


“On social media, plants are the craze,” Forland says. “I’m okay with buying certain things online, but not a plant. There’s the experience of going into a plant shop where you can feel the environment. You could be inspired.”

Especially given his background in experiential events, Forland is planning fun and photographable celebrations at the shop, including plant propagation parties.

And then there are the possibilities with cannabis. He’s looking now for new holiday gifts, including something called A Pot for Pot.


“We’re always exploring new products,” Forland says, flashing another grin.

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More Than a Few of Her Favorite Things

CHANDLER TANG is living her dream — curating and stocking what she describes as “very fun things” for Post Script, a new shop she’s just opened in a neighborhood she knows and loves.

Tang describes her new endeavor at 2413 California Street, near Fillmore — most recently habited by the women’s clothing boutique De Novo — as a “lifestyle store” that focuses on small goods.

The offerings are an eclectic mix of mostly hand-crafted items including pillows, throws, soap, candles, planners, bowls, art books, towels and jewelry, along with greeting cards ranging from nice to naughty. Somehow the mix seems unified, no doubt due to Tang’s buying philosophy: “I really just look for a sense of colors and designs that can enrich your every day,” she says.

Days before opening, Tang wanders about the space, newly brightened by refinished floors and a coat of white paint on the walls, one of them adorned with a mural by local artist Katie Benn.

It’s also clear there’s another unifying force: She’s stocked the shop with more than a few of her favorite things.

“Just look at this!” she marvels, plucking a stylized toothbrush with aqua bristles off one of the newly constructed shelves. “It’s by an amazing brand called Hay. They just strip everything and focus on great design.”

Then she heads for a glass display case in the back of the store. “And this jewelry, it’s crafted by Seattle designers in a zero-waste facility,” she explains. “It’s really affordable for the quality.”



Chandler Tang’s new shop Post Script has just opened.

trade shows, online sites and friends who are launching their own businesses — including one she met years ago in art camp, who now manufactures and cleverly packages pencils. “She’s become the Pencil Queen,” Tang says.

Tang is a San Francisco native who attended the neighborhood’s Hamlin School. Her family owns the building in which her shop is located. After stints at mega-retailers Sephora and Levi’s and a few start-ups, she says she was eager to try something on her own.

“I’ve always had this in the back of my mind,” she says, surveying her new shop just days before it opened. “There’s a lot of fashion and clothing on the street now. I hope my shop fills a needed niche.”

Post Script is slated to be open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tang plans to be on site most of the time. “For now, I want to be the face of the store — to meet my customers, to get that personal touch,” she says.

Turns out, Tang is also a fan of the stories behind the goods.

“Each item and maker has a unique story,” she says. “Like these Handuri notebooks, made by two sisters in the Korean tradition of bookmaking. They’re crafted from birch trees — and the birch grows back,” she says. Another favorite, also made by two sisters, are pieces from Pigeon Toe Ceramics in Portland. “You can use them as trivets, or soap dishes, or just have them out as art pieces. I just love the shape of them,” she says, stepping back to admire their zig-zig profile.

Tang has sourced items spanning 50 brands from

■ BACK ON THE BLOCK



Red thrones for the nail set

“FANCY!” That was the reaction from one returning customer to the completely remodeled — but somehow still homey — LP Nail Care at 2425 Fillmore.

Opened in 1991 by the perpetually in motion Sandy Le (above), who works with two other Vietnamese-American technicians she has long employed, LP closed temporarily months ago for a mandated earthquake retrofit, making do with limited space and limited days at a nearby hair salon on Webster Street.

But as of October 26, LP is back, seven long days a week, purveying its panoply of nail, waxing and “add on services” in a new and more glamorous setting complete with back-lit nail polish displays. Gone are family photos. In their places are posters proclaiming such maxims as: “Nails, one thing you can get into shape without exercise.”


A row of red-padded pedicure chairs — thrones, really — asserts itself in pride of place. The touch of a button offers each customer options of vigorous back massages, including knead, flap, knock and press. (Watch out for knock.) To the three women doing the footwork, the throne chairs offer something much better: built-in plumbing. No longer must they schlep basins of water to and from makeshift pedicure stations; water runs directly into and out of the iridescent and hygienic plastic-lined bowls.

True, prices have gone up, as did the salon’s post-retrofit rent. A basic mani-pedi is now \$45; a gel mani-pedi goes for \$80. But the massage is gratis.

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A visitor from Washington

I'VE LONG BELIEVED that if you stand still on Fillmore Street long enough, the whole world will drop by, one by one. So it shouldn't have been a big surprise when Washington Gov. Jay Inslee (above left) stopped by for lunch at Chouquet's. But I never cease to marvel when these things happen.

Like many, I've been glued to the sprawling and chaotic Democratic presidential debates, and became acquainted with Gov. Inslee's platform on climate change and his stand-up character. So when he came in I told him he was a real class act and said I didn't think all the other candidates would be singing his tune had he not started the song. He looked at me and considered what I said for a moment and then said gracefully: "Thank you, I think we really got the ball rolling on that." Then he went on to praise everyone else on the stage he shared.

At the end of his meal I asked if I could get a picture. He called over his assistant and introduced her, saying: "She specializes in making us old guys look good." He then spent a few minutes with me explaining the virtues of visiting the state of Washington. After he left, it occurred to me that it's not every day that a governor invites me to visit his state.

—MARK FANTINO

Farmer's Market Loses a Pioneer

PRODUCE FROM Terry Farms, picked just the day before, made its final appearance at the Fillmore Farmers Market on November 2 after owner Albert Terry died earlier in the week.

He was one of the original vendors when the market started in 2003 in the parking lot at Fillmore and Eddy, later to become the site of the Fillmore Heritage Center.

"He was there from the beginning," said his daughter Lisa Terry-Walters. He had learned about the new market as a board member of the sponsoring Pacific Coast Farmers Market Association.

"After going himself for the first couple of years, he started sending employees," she said, but they soon wanted to quit. "It wasn't worth it because they weren't making enough even to cover the cost of going."

So Terry started coming to Fillmore again and established an easy rapport with customers and the other farmers.

"He always knew that Fillmore was a special deal, and it became a market that was very personal for him," his daughter said. "This is the only market he attended regularly himself."

Terry Farms specialized in peaches — especially white varieties and old-fashioned clings — and pluots. In the fall there were grapes, persimmons and pomegranates.

A decade ago, Terry asked his son-in-



Albert Terry's son-in-law Ephriam Walters has been at the Fillmore market for a decade.

law, the tough ex-Marine Ephriam Walters, to come with him to Fillmore. "So I cancelled my fishing trip and came," Walters said. For the past five years, Walters has been in charge, and has built a strong base of customers who return every week for his fresh fruit and no-nonsense approach.

"When I got out of the Marines, it was hard for me to transition," Walters said on his final Saturday morning at the Fillmore market, as he bade farewell to his regulars. "This market has helped me. It has changed so much, but a lot of these people I've been dealing with for 10 years."

Walters said the market paid Terry's medical bills in recent years as he battled heart disease and had to stay close to the ranch he farmed for 51 years in Denair, in Stanislaus County.

Now the family is putting the farm on the market.

"Our family is very hopeful the farm will be purchased by another farmer who will continue to be as passionate about the products the farm produces as my dad was," said Terry's daughter, and Ephriam's wife, Lisa. "With any luck, they will be able to attend the Fillmore market."



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By FRAN MORELAND JOHNS

AT AGE 98, Rita Semel doesn't waste time worrying about retirement. "Some time ago, I went to my friend Pam David's 'rewiring party,' " she says. "And I thought: That's what I'm going to do. I'm not retiring, I'm rewiring."

That decision was good news for the neighborhood — and far beyond. Semel talked about her rewired history, current activities and life in general recently during a rare quiet moment in her apartment overlooking Lafayette Park.

"When Max [her husband of 51 years] died in 1994, I looked around at our 1902 Victorian in the Castro — 17 steps to the front door, 17 steps to the basement — and said, 'What am I doing here?'" she recalls. "Though I hated leaving the Castro, I knew a couple of people in this building, so I put my name on the list." It soon became home.

Semel loves Lafayette Park, but best of all her not-so-new-anymore address is ideally located to access her main centers of volunteer activity: Grace Cathedral, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, where the San Francisco Interfaith Council regularly meets, and Temple Emanu-El. These locales, plus City Hall, command much of her attention.

"IT IS FASCINATING being on the boards of Grace and Emanu-El at the same time," Semel says. She is a long-time congregant of Temple Emanu-El, as well as an enthusiastic supporter of the social justice ministries at Grace Cathedral and other Christian faith communities. The S.F. Interfaith Council, which established the Rita R. Semel Endowment Fund in her honor several years ago, is among the most significant accomplishments of her rewirement.

In December 1988, then mayor Art Agnos asked a group of clergy to help with the city's homeless population during an exceptionally cold and wet winter. A committee was formed, and shelters were opened at Calvary Presbyterian Church on Fillmore, Grace Cathedral, Old First Presbyterian Church and Old St. Mary's Cathedral. The shelters closed in February 1989.

Then the '89 Loma Prieta earthquake struck, and Agnos again appealed to the interfaith group for help. Calvary's pastor, Jim Emerson, helped secure relief money from Church World Service, and a number of faith communities went to work. But Semel says she recalls telling her group of co-workers: "We can't keep setting up committees every time something happens. We need to organize."



Rita Semel, co-founder of the San Francisco Interfaith Council, with the group's executive director, Michael Pappas, in the Presidio Chapel.

Rewired, Not Retired

Rita Semel, co-founder of the S.F. Interfaith Council, is a force for good

She and a colleague, Mary Culp, went to meet with the Marin Interfaith Council, and the San Francisco Interfaith Council was born. Its original prime movers were Semel, Culp and Emerson.

Since Michael Pappas was hired as the group's executive director in 2007 — a post Semel filled as a volunteer for more than

a decade while the board and organization grew — the council has become a major force for good. It continues to sponsor the annual Winter Shelter, which provides food and shelter for 100 homeless men during the winter months, as well as other community projects.

Semel has known great joy with the

success of the interfaith council and other endeavors. But in her 98 years she has also known great sorrow. Her younger daughter Jane died in a tragic accident shortly before her 18th birthday.

"It was the most devastating thing that ever happened," Semel says. And when older daughter Elisabeth came home from Bard College and didn't want to go back, Semel was inconsolable. "But my very wise husband said one day: 'If we want to honor Jane, we have to go on with our lives. We have to give back.'"

Semel has proceeded to do just that through her many volunteer activities. Daughter Elisabeth ("Don't get me started," her mom says, "I am so proud.") is the founding director of the Berkeley Law Death Penalty Clinic and is a nationally recognized expert on capital punishment.

BORN AND RAISED in New York, Rita Semel first came to San Francisco with her parents in 1939. After graduating from Barnard College, she married and traveled with her soldier husband until he was shipped overseas in World War II. She worked as a "copy girl" and then a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, later becoming the first associate editor of the newly established *Jewish Community Bulletin*.

After daughter Elisabeth's birth in 1950, Semel retired from the *Bulletin* and began doing freelance public relations for the March of Dimes, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and the Israeli consulate. In 1964, she served on the committee that organized the San Francisco Conference on Religion and Race, then became its coordinator for the next 25 years. She later was associate director and then executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Semel has a wildly diverse assortment of honors and activities. Among them: She's on the board of Catholic Charities CYO Family Services America, co-founder of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio and has been honored as a pioneer of the Islamic Society of San Francisco and United Muslims of America.

In addition to faith communities, she has long been active in civic affairs. Asked to name a favorite cause in that area, she says: "It's hard to choose. But one would be being on the S.F. Human Services Commission, and our in-home supportive services. We serve people on Medi-Cal, keeping them in their homes."

Semel has several pearls of wisdom about living well to age 98. "Keep busy," she says. "And don't leave things for someone else — because if you don't do it, who will?"

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3rd I Filmfest Returns to Japantown

By ANDREA CHASE

THE 3RD I FILM FESTIVAL continues its mission of presenting a selection of films from Southeast Asia at Japantown's New People on November 10, with four programs and a return master class from filmmaker Nishtha Jain.

In the master class, at 12:30 p.m., Jain will share her process as well as clips from her award-winning documentaries addressing human rights issues, including *City of Photos*, *Lakshmi and Me*, *At My Doorstep* and *Gulabi Gang* — as well as her work-in-progress *The Golden Thread*, about the dying jute industry and its effects on the community that relies on it. She will also share her first narrative film, a short about misogyny in medicine.

Chippa, (2:30 p.m.) from Safdar Rahman, follows the 10-year-old title character as he spends a long night celebrating his birthday by searching through the streets of Kolkata for his absent father. It's a place of poverty and struggle, but seen through Chippa's eyes, it becomes an adventureland as he and his puppy meet an assortment of people and an ominous red balloon. Heartwarming without being naive, it features Sunny Pawar in an endearing performance.

Bangla (4:30 p.m.) introduces viewers to the Bangladeshi community in Rome. Starring its director and co-writer Phaim Bhuiyan as a second-generation Italian based on Bhuiyan himself, this charming comedy shows how he tries to balance family tradition, a struggling music career and a new, non-Bengalis girlfriend who has swept him off his feet.



Bangla explores the Bangladeshi community in Rome.

three women living in Tamil Nadu. The three inhabit different decades, starting in 1980, and director Vasanth uses the progression of those decades to explore what does and doesn't change for everyday women living in a crushing patriarchy. It is a masterpiece of small but momentous moments, with performances from the lead actresses (Kalieaswari Srinivasan, Parvathy, Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli) meticulously honed for maximum emotional impact without histrionics.

For ticketing and more information about the 3rd I Film Festival, go to thirdi.org.

“Coast to Coast: Mumbai to the Mission” (6:45 p.m.) is a shorts program that includes comedy with:

- “The Iceman,” a deliciously wry parsing of cultural stereotypes.
- Andrew Sturm’s “31 Foot Ladders,” about a company taking economic advantage of Trump’s 30-foot border wall.
- Omar Khan and Simon Ryninks’ “The Plunge,” about a third date gone askew.
- Mahesh Pailoor’s “Mona Shaikh: Comedian,” a mini-doc about the Pakistani-American comedian’s approach to comedy and life.

It also takes on serious issues in “When the Dust Came In: Mongolian Herders Negotiate Their Future With a Massive Mine,” another mini-doc about nomadic herders negotiating a way to continue with their way of life when the Oyu Tolgoi mine arrived.

Sivaranjani and Two Other Women (8:30 p.m.) delivers an anthology of

Q & A

A celebration of South Asia

THE 3RD I Film Festival’s specific mission is “to reflect the lives and experiences of the many ethnic, religious and national identities that comprise the South Asian identity, and to promote worldwide interaction about it.” Festival executive director and co-founder Ivan Jaigirdar recently mused about fulfilling that mission at this year’s event.

Are there particular issues or concerns that influence the films you select for the festival?

Films that are celebrating the diversity of the South Asian community and surreptitiously working at exploring challenges and bridging differences are what we try and focus on.

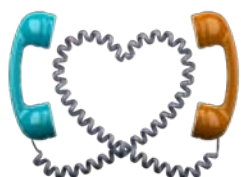
Nishtha Jain is returning to do another master class. What is the importance of including something like that in the festival — and with Jain in particular?

We always try to bring up topics that are in the cultural zeitgeist. Films and filmmakers mirror a lot of the pressing social and political issues, and Nishtha Jain has consistently done that in her films. I believe we’ve shown most, if not all, of her films throughout the years. So a master class with Nishtha is a great opportunity for us all to learn about filmmaking and social and political issues, including the #metoo movement in India.

Are there films you would highlight?

Chippa, *Bangla* and 3rd I’s signature collection of shorts, titled “Coast to Coast, Mumbai to the Mission,” are all worth checking out. They all feature comedic fun and also have strong social messages. It’s been great to have some lighter and more humorous films with a message at the festival.

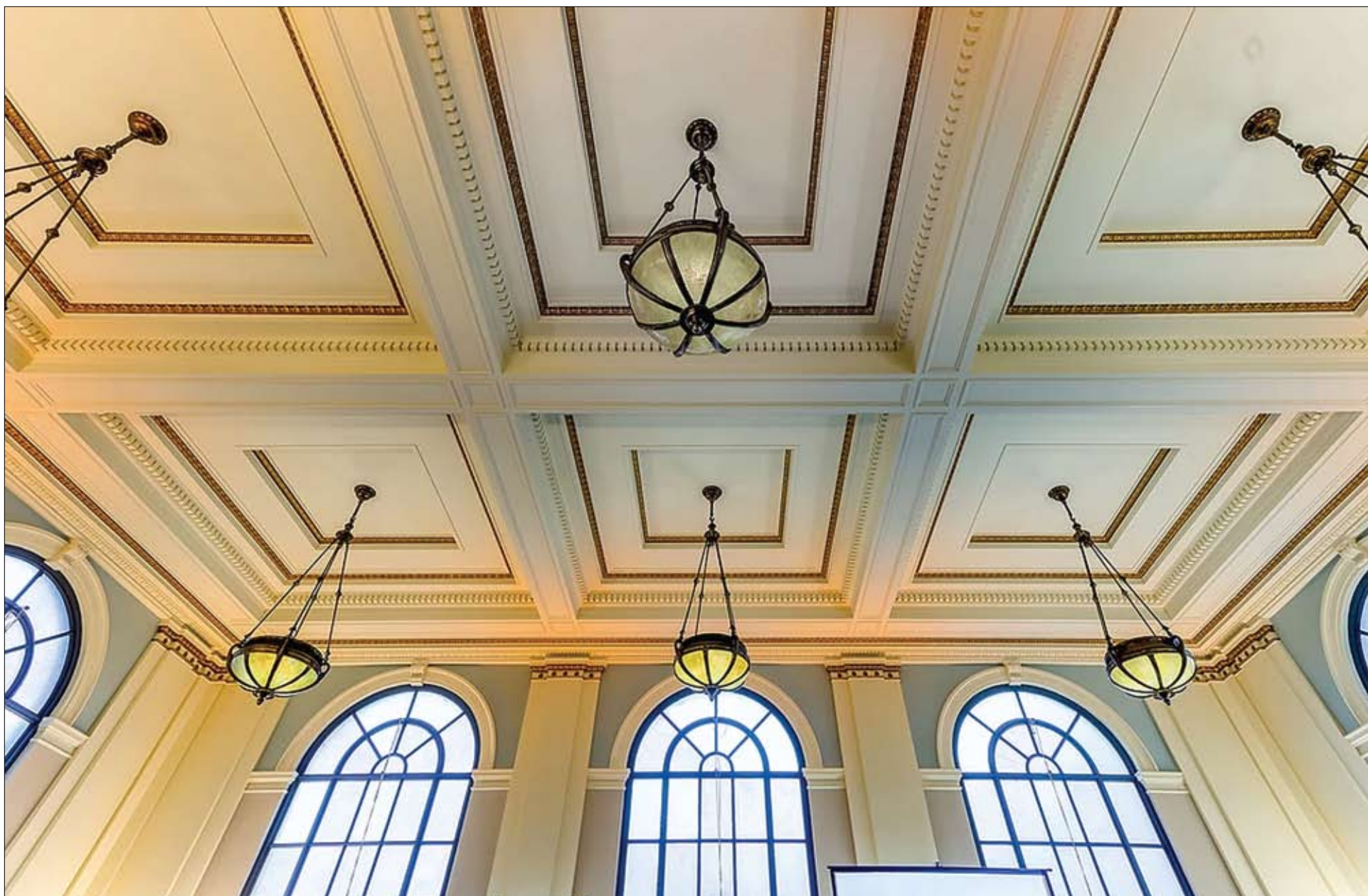
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BOND EVENTS

New Life FOR AN *Old Library*

BY CHRIS BARNETT

ONE OF THE neighborhood's enduring architectural treasures has been resurrected and a mystery is solved — almost.

The 107-year-old Beaux Arts four-story Health Sciences Library on the corner of Webster and Sacramento — which gave refuge to the smart and studious for decades, but has stood empty collecting cobwebs for the last five years — is being reborn as a venue for “mission based” organizations and groups looking for conference and symposium space.

A designated San Francisco landmark once known as the Lane Library, the building at 2395 Sacramento Street is now owned by entrepreneurial software executive-turned-humanitarian Kamal El-Wattar and his wife, Anya, a Michelin starred chef, restaurateur and wellness advocate. The couple bought it more than two years ago for a reported \$9.5 million, but have been silent on their plans for the property. Until now.

Kamal El-Wattar heads a nonprofit called The Answers Project that goes far afield for existential truths. Project researchers once trekked to Borneo to question the elders of an Indonesian culture about their life, philosophy and happiness. He is also a board member of the Biomimicry Institute, a low-to-no-profile think tank of sorts probing how technology and nature can be combined to resolve environmental problems.

Anya El-Wattar is an activist and artist who runs a local nonprofit, Project Butterfly Social, that also creates food events. They live in the neighborhood.

The building the couple now owns has a rich heritage. It was designed in 1912 by



The historic Medical Science Library at Sacramento and Webster Streets is now known simply as The Library. Top, the majestic former reading room is now available as an event space. Right, a curving staircase connects the main three floors of the building, which was completed in 1912 and is a historic landmark.

San Francisco architect Albert Pissis, who also designed Temple Sherith Israel, which shares the block. The high-ceilinged structure was initially owned by Cooper Medical College, the first medical school in the West, which opened in a Victorian brick building across the street in 1882.

Stanford University acquired the Cooper complex to serve as its medical school from 1908 to 1956, when the Stanford hospital moved to Palo Alto. The complex was then expanded and became the Presbyterian Medical Center. In the early 1990s, it became the California Pacific Medical Center.

For decades, the library was shared by students at the University of the Pacific's dental school, then located diagonally across from the library. Students used the library as a reading room and study hall until the dental school relocated downtown

five years ago. Its neighborhood home was gutted and converted into The Pacific, a 77-unit condominium complex at Webster and Sacramento.

To help bring the library back to life, the El-Wattars hired a Washington, D.C., firm, Bond Events, to produce gatherings. The grandly stated mission: to make the century-old building the Bay Area's go-to spot to “grow, meet, learn, discover and make history.”

A website shows off the space and the firm's promotional prowess. The library, once filled with shelves and stacks piled high with musty books and instructional videos, today looks positively palatial, with a wide, sweeping staircase connecting its main floors.

Bond Event marketing director Kate Starr says a separate ground floor gallery



space is ideal for “art shows, gatherings and fundraisings.” The second floor, with its large open space that was formerly the reading room, is called The Library. The third floor has meeting and breakout spaces and the fourth floor will have offices for the owners' nonprofit ventures. The building also has an outdoor garden.

“We are committed to creating flexible space that helps heal our bodies, our minds and the planet,” the website proclaims.

It appears the building is not going to compete head to head with the city's hotel ballrooms and meetings spaces. “We will have limited social events,” says Starr. Revenue the library generates will be used to support the needs of the El-Wattars' foundation, she says.

For more information about the building and its availability for private events, visit thelibrarysf.com.

He Became Thoroughly Modern

Gardner Dailey made his mark in the neighborhood

By BRIDGET MALEY

IN 1952, the New York Museum of Modern Art published *Built in USA: Post-War Architecture*, edited by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler. The book, a who's who of architects and their signature projects of the time, featured works by Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Eames, Philip Johnson, Mies van der Rohe, Richard Neutra, Walter Gropius, as well as a lesser-known San Francisco-based architect: Gardner Dailey.

In 1948, Dailey was hired by the American Red Cross to design the building for its new headquarters in San Francisco. Sited on Sutter Street between two established hotels, the Queen Anne and the Majestic, the building was a sharp contrast to its older neighbors. A thoroughly modern edifice, the building was featured and described in the MOMA publication, which noted it had “grey concrete walls poured in V-joined tongue and groove boards, set vertically, to produce a finely ribbed surface texture. Interior offices open on a central court; on the top floor, adjoining a sundeck,



Gardner Dailey’s corner design at 1 Raycliff Terrace, built in 1951, marks the entry to a cul-du-sac featuring a grouping of mid-century houses.

there is an auditorium which is also used as an employees’ cafeteria.”

Dailey, a Minnesotan by birth, relocated to California in 1915 at the age of 20, but quickly traveled to Costa Rica, where he was hired to build houses for banana plantation workers. After receiving accolades for service in World War I, which left him blind in one eye, Dailey enrolled at UC Berkeley in 1919 to study economics.

By 1921 he had transferred to Stanford, then finally completed his course work in structural engineering at San Francisco’s Heald College. By 1927, after a European

sojourn, Dailey had earned an architectural certificate and opened his own San Francisco office.

The following year, Dailey designed one of his first projects, an addition to the Victorian-era Haas-Lilienthal House on Franklin Street for Samuel and Alice Haas Lilienthal. His early works were fairly traditional, often conjuring various revivalist styles. However, by 1935, Dailey had fully embraced Modernism. Over the next decade, Dailey established himself as a capable designer. He worked on many residential projects, including a dramatic modern house on Russian Hill’s Montclair

Terrace, which has been altered over time, and a home for Ernest Gallo in Modesto.

In the late 1930s, he designed the Berliner House at 120 Commonwealth Avenue in Jordan Park, which apparently caused quite a stir given its drastic difference from the traditional architecture of its neighbors.

Between 1937 and 1940, Dailey designed three houses on Normandie Terrace, a dead end block terminating at a set of stairs situated between Broadway and Vallejo, just west of Scott Street, in the heart of Pacific Heights. Many of Dailey’s residential projects during this era were

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Gardner Dailey's headquarters building for the Red Cross on Sutter Street, near Gough, was a sharp contrast to its older neighbors.

photographed by the now famous architectural photographer Rodger Sturtevant, including several of these houses.

The pre-war period culminated with a 1938 Woodside house that secured Dailey first prize in a *House Beautiful* competition for its modern aesthetic.

■

Just before the U.S. entered World War II, Dailey was awarded a commission to design Brazil's pavilion at the 1939 Golden

Gate International Exposition, which included a glass wall not unlike his later Red Cross Building.

In 1941, as war became a reality, Dailey completed the house at 2674 Broadway, near the apex of the hill at Divisadero Street, the front facade of which is also dominated by a great expanse of glass. Designed for Walter Heil, who had been director of the de Young Museum and the regional director of the federal Public

Works of Art project in the 1930s. Dailey's collaborator for the Heil House was famed landscape architect Thomas Church.

During the war, Dailey applied for and was granted a patent for the stressed skin roof and for its integration in unit construction. After the war, he was selected by the American Battle Monuments Commission to design the Pacific War Memorial in Manila, the Philippines.

His much-touted project for the Red

Cross was designed just after the war ended. The publicity likely spurred other commissions. A project at 1 Raycliff Terrace for Joan and Robert Sinton, a brokerage executive and prominent member of San Francisco's Jewish community, was completed in 1951. Situated on a corner lot, the house marks the entry to the cul-du-sac featuring a grouping of mid-century houses, including one by Joe Esherick and two by Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons.

During the late 1940s and into the 1950s, Dailey completed a number of projects for the Matson Company in San Francisco and Hawaii, including several hotels. In addition, he designed several buildings at Woodside's Filoli after Lurline and William Roth purchased the famous estate from the Bourn family. In the later 1950s and early 1960s, Dailey did a fair amount of work at the University of California, Berkeley and at Stanford University.

In 1961, Dailey married his long-time secretary, Lucille Downey, in a New York ceremony. The architect Edward Durrell Stone was his best man and hosted a reception after the nuptials. Sadly, just a few years later, Dailey's health began to decline, including a brain ailment that he never fully disclosed to close friends or associates. On October 24, 1967, Dailey took his own life, leaping from the Golden Gate Bridge.

■

Dailey's associates continued his work and practice. The Red Cross Building, which was a truly modern building, was lost to the wrecking ball in 2001 to accommodate the Coventry Park assisted living facility. The old KRON television studio building at 1001 Van Ness Avenue, which was being completed by Dailey when he died, is now being demolished.



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2129 California St	5	4	2	3,205	21	10/4/2019	4,800,000	4,950,000
2940 Jackson St	4	4	1	2,445	0	9/23/2019	4,500,000	4,999,999
2411 Green St	3	4	2	n/a	0	9/23/2019	4,995,000	5,100,000
2781 Union St	3	4	2	3,090	0	9/17/2019	5,250,000	5,250,000
2503 Broadway	5	4	2	3,915	8	10/15/2019	6,500,000	7,000,000
2765 Vallejo St	4	4	2	4,300	9	10/1/2019	7,000,000	8,500,000

Condos / Co-ops / TICs / Lofts

2999 California St #64	1	1	0	653	27	10/15/2019	625,000	625,000
2999 California St #404	1	1	0	653	17	9/18/2019	749,000	750,000
2040 Franklin St #1202	1	2	1	n/a	13	9/24/2019	939,000	957,500
3436 Clay St #1	1	1	0	824	39	10/7/2019	1,050,000	1,025,000
2823 Pierce St	1	1	1	708	7	9/27/2019	779,000	1,030,000
2164 Pacific Ave	2	2	0	782	21	9/25/2019	999,000	1,150,000
2480 Bush St	3	1	0	1,431	20	10/4/2019	1,150,000	1,250,000
1719 Baker St	2	2	0	1,030	26	9/17/2019	1,195,000	1,270,000
1895 Pacific Ave #405	1	1	1	1,115	14	10/7/2019	995,000	1,310,000
1855 Sacramento St #4	2	2	1	1,456	7	10/1/2019	1,290,000	1,350,000
1701 Jackson St #406	2	2	1	1,108	32	9/20/2019	1,349,000	1,355,000
1501 Greenwich St #201	2	2	1	1,151	14	10/9/2019	1,195,000	1,400,000
1800 Washington St #618	2	2	1	1,072	4	10/15/2019	1,349,000	1,450,000
347 Maple St	2	2	1	n/a	10	10/4/2019	1,295,000	1,538,000
2774 Union St #1	2	2	1	1,495	55	10/1/2019	1,495,000	1,550,000
2200 Sacramento St #308	2	2	1	n/a	8	9/17/2019	1,795,000	1,810,000
2846 Sacramento St	2	2	1	n/a	14	10/3/2019	1,849,000	1,900,000
2351 Green St	2	3	1	1,750	35	10/3/2019	1,895,000	2,125,000
2249 Broderick St	3	4	1	2,036	60	10/4/2019	2,195,000	2,195,000
2239 Webster St	3	2	1	1,964	8	9/20/2019	2,395,000	2,455,000
3228 Clay St	4	2	1	n/a	0	9/16/2019	2,625,000	2,625,000
2855 Jackson St #102	4	3	2	2,098	0	9/26/2019	2,695,000	2,725,000
2863 Washington St	3	3	1	1,990	10	9/30/2019	2,495,000	2,910,000
3993 Washington St	3	3	1	2,100	0	9/27/2019	3,095,000	3,000,000
2179 Pacific Ave	4	3	1	2,775	21	9/26/2019	3,150,000	3,050,000
2241 Webster St	3	4	1	2,053	14	9/20/2019	3,095,000	3,095,000
2190 Broadway #3W	2	4	1	3,200	26	9/20/2019	4,100,000	4,023,956
2121 Webster St #501	3	3	2	2,112	0	10/9/2019	5,250,000	5,250,000
1635 Green St	3	3	2	3,125	12	9/30/2019	5,990,000	5,340,000

Market sending mixed messages

ALTHOUGH RESIDENTIAL property sales in the neighborhood have reached the highest level since before the last recession and the market remains healthy, certain factors indicate buyer sentiment has tempered.

There were 39 single-family home and condominium sales in Pacific Heights, Lower Pacific Heights, Cow Hollow and Presidio Heights between mid-September and mid-October — traditionally one of the year's busiest real estate seasons. Even given seasonal trends, activity in the neighborhood was up by 34.5 percent from the same time in the previous two years, reaching the highest level of sales for that time period since 2004.

The city's most desirable real estate is still in demand, with two-thirds of local sales commanding premiums this fall. But headlines that warn of an impending recession and slipping consumer confidence may have caused some potential buyers to pause.

And while traffic for most open houses remains solid, real estate professionals report that buyers seem less urgent than in previous months, thanks in part to more inventory coming onto the market. This minor market lull might not last. But it could offer motivated home shoppers the opportunity to avoid contingency clauses and bidding wars while their more cautious competitors wait it out.

— Data and commentary provided by PATRICK BARBER at Compass Real Estate. Contact him at patrick.barber@compass.com or call 415-345-3001.

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Shaban Shakoori is a real estate salesperson licensed by the state of California affiliated with Compass. Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the state of California and abides by equal housing opportunity laws.

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As a Bay Area native and Pacific Heights resident, Shaban has built deep connections to help serve his clients. He has been one of the top producing agents in Northern California since 2005.

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The Best 10 Years of My Life

BY JOEL BERGE

I HAVE SO MANY fond memories of the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill that I could write a book. [See “PacBag Was the Local Gathering Place,” October *New Fillmore*.]

First off, the PacBag was the PacBag because of owners Susie and Craig Bashel, two of the greatest people I have ever met, let alone had the honor to work for. All the great events we had and the loyal clientele that supported us were due to the good will of those two people. I cannot say enough kind things about them and I miss them dearly.

I spent the best decade of my life on the corner of Pine and Fillmore — and also maybe the toughest 10 years of my life. We had so many great times at that bar most people called the “Cheers” of San Francisco. All the same guests would come night after night and rehash the day’s events, and it was not uncommon for us to hang out together on our days off. We all really enjoyed each other’s company.

I threw an annual Thanksgiving dinner at my home every year for all the misfits who had no family, or no place to go. It ended up being quite an ordeal. I think I had 50 guests the last couple years. They were by far my favorite Thanksgivings to date.

We would buy blocks of Giants tickets and meet at the bar on a Sunday morning for Bloody Marys, then jump on a chartered bus and head to Candlestick to tailgate and spend a day of fun in the sun. Susie and Craig never took their tailgates lightly. We’d have barbequed oysters with pesto and asiago cheese, ribs, New York

steaks, always a nice keg of beer and plenty of wine for all. It was so much fun, and I’m sure the bartenders working the bar when we returned were biting their tongues and praying we’d all disperse in a timely manner.

We had the best oyster bar in the city, with more than a dozen different oysters every day. It was quite a feat to keep that kind of inventory, but Craig made sure we had the variety. He also provided trips for the staff to Bodega Bay and oyster farms so all knew about the farming and the work it took to keep these mollusks on a menu.

Susie always had the best wines and sparkling wines to pair with each oyster. She was quite the wine master also. She had an incredible reputation in the business for her knowledge and insight — so much so that Robert Mondavi chose to pair his wine with the dishes of Chef Lonnie Williams. That provided for a night we’ll all never forget.

My part in the PacBag was melding the oil-and-water colorful honyokers that loitered in the bar each night. What an eclectic array of guests we had! My personal favorite would have to be Marilyn Fisher, my personal attorney. More than once she helped me with legal issues, along with a slew of others who needed free legal advice. After overserving her for many years, I had the honor of driving her to sobriety, which she still is today, must be 30 years later. She will always have a special place in my heart.

Chuck Bernard and wife Beryl were nightly inhabitants, along with Ronald Hobbs, Ruth Dewson, Danny E., Craig Martin, Mr. Nash, Bob Swig, Dino, Harry Denton, on occasion Robin Williams,

Willie and Jerry Brown. These were just a dabbling of the cast of characters who would pop in to the PacBag. It was a hip little spot in the ’80s and early ’90s.

The earthquake was quite a day. I was at Candlestick when it hit and spent the next couple of hours navigating traffic with no traffic lights. I first drove to the PacBag, only to find the bar full in the dim candlelit space. It was like everyone was waiting for me to get back from the ballpark to make sure I was okay, and then everybody wrapped it up and slowly went home. Those who didn’t leave I took home to my place, and we stayed up all night waiting for the electricity to come back on. I had some upset neighbors.

I do remember calling my parents from the pay phone at the PacBag and letting them know I was safe. I shed a few tears in that conversation and I’m sure alcohol had nothing to do with that.

Those were also the toughest 10 years of my life. It was such a great family, and we lost several family members to the AIDS epidemic which infiltrated the city. Losing so many young men in a short period of time was a real test of strength. There were many days when going to work was a real chore, knowing certain people were not going to be a part of the puzzle anymore. It was a morale buster and, probably more than any reason, the fatigue factor for me and the reason for me to move on and find a different space. Telling Susie and Craig I was moving on was not an easy thing to do. But for my own peace mind, I needed the change, leaving behind the best 10 years of my life.

Joel Berge was bar manager of the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill.

Watering at the same well

THE PLACE WAS jammed, the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill. We had just come from St. Dominic’s after listening to Mother Teresa speak of terrible sufferings in Calcutta. During the offertory, the long-armed baskets heaped with the long green. And in those days there was the “AIDS thing” going on. But it was most likely guilt, not conscience, that stuffed the coffers.

I suppose it did not matter, for money is a measure of sincerity.

At the time I was not well fixed, and practicality has never been my long suit. But I was walking in a \$200 pair of shoes and wearing a \$50 necktie. And now I had an \$8 glass of Cabernet sitting in front of me. A half-dozen oysters would run me that twice. Of the gathered crowd I was one of the minnows. If I sipped slowly, I could ride this for another couple of hours.

The crowd thinned at about 10 and I cashed out with a generous tip, about the same as I put into the long arm of guilt. I left with \$6. Pathetic, I know. But I wanted to see it through. I hung my clothes not so neatly. I was drunk in some indefinable way, not the .08% way.

I did not fully believe Mother Teresa, my shoes, the oysters, the necktie. And I didn’t care about lepers or orphans in Calcutta. I lit a cigarette and turned on the 10 o’clock news.



BIG BUTTERFLY paint-lipped Ruth Dewson (above) was a lost soul in a sleek red Cadillac. She did nails and eyebrows before she got into hats. Hats made her famous.

We used to water at the same well, the Pacific Heights Bar & Grill, after work. That place was the neighborhood bar, but not one of your yahoo show-your-ass joints. It was real. It had the odor of privilege, but it didn’t stink. And it was home-like.

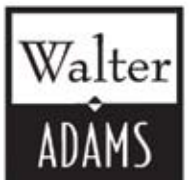
Ruth often excused herself to the ladies room, leaving her checkbook open. And I or one person or another who was sitting at hand could see the check stubs written to “Friends of the Committee for (name your politician).”

She was a large and voluptuous woman — fun and funny — and a conniving bitch. A little girl wanting to be grown up. She wanted to prove something to Paris, Texas, her hometown. But mostly she wanted to prove something to herself.

So interesting, this business of being alive.

— RONALD HOBBS

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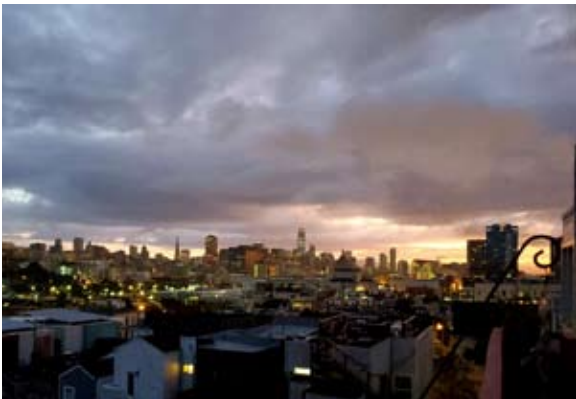
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