

# The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

## WHY NATIVE GARDENS?

page 28

Issue 189

Winter 2010



# THE SEMAPHORE # 189 Winter 2010

## FEATURES

Jack Lund . . . . .	5	Before the Castro: North Beach A Gay Mecca . . .	16
Parks for a Day on Grant Avenue . . . . .	6	The Invasion of the Testarossas . . . . .	19
Four Out-of-Our Neighborhood Activists Point the Way . . . . .	7	A Neighborhood Preserved. . . . .	20
North Beach Icons: A Little Older, A Little Better . .	11	The Changing Face of North Beach Italian Restaurants . . . . .	22
THD Celebrates Non-Profit Aquarium . . . . .	14	New Neighborhood Organization Focuses on Independent Living. . . . .	25
Bob Watke Receives Dwellers' 2009 Beautification Award . . . . .	15	Why Native Gardens? . . . . .	28

### COLUMNS

The President's Corner . . . . .	3
From the Desk of Supervisor Chiu . . . . .	8
Parks, Trees, & Birds Report . . . . .	9
Parking & Traffic Committee Report . . . . .	30
Art & Culture Report. . . . .	34

### THD BUSINESS

Board Motions. . . . .	37
Board of Directors . . . . .	39
THD Committees . . . . .	39
Membership Info . . . . .	back cover
Cover: . . . . .	Native fern, photo by Judy Irving, see page 28

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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## IN PRAISE OF GERRY



by Vedica Puri

**I**t all started with a man named Don. He was the reason Gerry Crowley, former THD president, moved from New York to San Francisco so many decades ago. Don may have come and gone, but Gerry's love for the city only grew stronger.

For almost 50 years, Gerry has lived within a two to three block radius of her first apartment at 409 Lombard Street, early on meeting her future husband Sam S. Crowley Jr. and indulging in the good life North Beach had to offer. Then in 1986, she saw a THD spokesperson interviewed on TV about the proliferation of financial institutions in North Beach. That same year, at the North Beach Festival, after talking to folks manning the THD booth, Gerry filled out an application to become a THD member.

Starting off as THD's social chair, then a board

member, Gerry was President from 1997-1999 and 2001-2003. THD became Gerry's springboard for community activism.

Pat Cady, the *Semaphore* editor while Gerry was THD President, remembers vividly the fight to ensure Rite Aid did not take over a valuable piece of North Beach real estate. Cady recalls standing at a bus stop near Washington Square one freezing Saturday morning only to see Gerry setting up a folding table and chair to collect petition signatures against Rite-Aid. As Cady puts it, "I got on the bus and I knew we were going to win."

But Gerry's largesse was not confined to the  
*continued on page 4*

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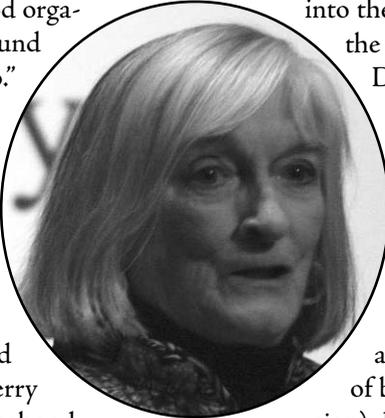
## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued from page 3

boundaries of the THD. Other neighborhood groups routinely invited Gerry to speak about how to create an effective community group like THD. It was this relationship with other neighborhood organizations that led Gerry to co-found the "Neighborhood Network Group." This group meets every Friday with various Department heads, Commissioners and other City figures to discuss good government and good planning.

Gerry commands respect from all corners of the City. Current District 3 Supervisor and Board President David Chiu says: "Gerry Crowley is the epitome of neighborhood activism, community leadership, democratic values, and human decency. I can't speak highly enough of her, and it has been an honor to know Gerry and work with her to protect our neighborhoods."

In 2000, when the City had its first district elections, she was the one that cajoled Aaron Peskin,



then THD President, into running for supervisor. During the campaign, she maintained his calendar and drove him to campaign events. She stepped back into the THD presidency when Peskin won the District 3 board seat. She supported David Chiu's campaign for supervisor in much the same way.

Gerry parlayed her community activism onto the political front when she decided in 2004 to run for a seat on the Democratic County Central Committee, handily winning her first political seat at age 69. In 2006, even a scary diagnosis of breast cancer (now in complete remission) did nothing to blunt her edge. She ran

continued on page 5

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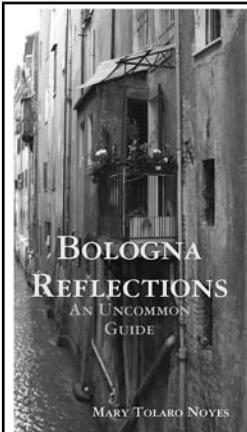
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**Mary Tolaro-Noyes is a long time THD  
member with published stories in  
anthologies and online sites.**

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued from page 4

for her DCCC seat again.

It is only fitting that in 2009 Gerry was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for Community Activism from NEN (the Neighborhood Empowerment Network) and received the Sue Bierman Lifetime Achievement Award for Neighborhood Activism from the San Francisco Democratic Party. And, then on September 13, 2009, the Board of Supervisors designated September 13, 2009, Gerry's 75th birthday, as Gerry Crowley Day.

Gerry's message: "It's everybody's favorite neighborhood and city," you have to "respect history" and

the only way to do that is through sincere community activism. Gerry has been a part of so many issues and developments it is tough to keep track. From the fight to ensure Right-Aid did not take over a prized North Beach corner to the current fight against upzoning 555 Washington (from 200 feet to 400 feet), you can be sure Gerry is on the forefront advocating in her persistent, tough, but always polite, way.

Simply put, Gerry is a one-woman army that has made our neighborhood a better place. For that, on behalf of our membership and Board—Gerry— we thank you. And we thank Don for bringing you here. ✂

---

## JACK LUND

by Paul Scott

Telegraph Hill has lost a very well loved resident and neighbor, Jack Lund. Jack died peacefully at his home on November 27, 2009, at the age of 96. Born on January 10, 1913 in San Francisco, Jack grew up in Berkeley, where he attended the University of California, graduating in the Class of 1935. Inducted into the Army in June 1941, Jack rose to the rank of Major and was honorably discharged in 1946. Upon his return to the United States, Jack worked for 25 years in marketing for the Bay Area's Freidan Calculating Company.

A resident on the East side of Telegraph Hill for almost half a century, Jack had a lifelong interest in tennis. He attended 31 Wimbledon championships and 25 Roland Garros French tennis championships. He also played tennis himself until he was 91.

Active socially in distinctive realms, Jack served at different points as director of the University of California Alumni Association and as director of Villa Taverna. For many years, Jack held legendary parties at his home on the Hill, with some of the world's greatest talents in music and sports, along

with other luminaries, as his guests. Always kind and gracious, Jack was a wonderful neighbor and friend. He will be sorely missed. ✂

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# PARKS FOR A DAY ON GRANT AVENUE

article by Julie Jaycox and Art Peterson, photos by Julie Jaycox

Anyone driving through North Beach on September 18 around 9 am may have wondered about the sudden appearance of tall thin trees in black pots standing in empty parking spaces on Grant Ave., Soon a forklift was rolling out sod onto the asphalt in front of local businesses and furniture, hula hoops and a Buddha moved into the spaces.

Park[ing] Day, an international day of repurposing vehicular space by temporarily turning parking spaces into park space was underway.

An enthusiastic group of merchants participated and had a wonderful time, each enjoying a car-free view out the front door. Tourists stopped to play croquet with handmade mallets in front of Schein & Schein as Jimmy and Marti laughed from behind their Dutch doors. After Dan Macchiarini kicked the cars out of the metered spot in front of Macchiarini Creative Design, anyone could sit down on the couch Dan provided and watch an Art Car documentary.

I myself enjoyed a day of sitting comfortably outside without blocking the sidewalk, chatting with passersby, enjoying a drink, and eating my lunch in the fresh air. I really like sitting in the street!



# FOUR OUT-OF-OUR NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVISTS POINT THE WAY

by *Julienne Christensen*

**M**any of us are secure (smug?) in the knowledge that we live in the best neighborhood in the best city in the world. That's hard to dispute. But there are cities (Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, for example) that are transitioning admirably between what-has-been and what-will-be while providing wonderful amenities for their residents. In our own city, in other neighborhoods, people who care very much are grappling with dangers and opportunities that match or exceed our own. What can North Beach and THD learn from their good work? These brief profiles provide some clues.



## **Susan Eslick, Dogpatch Neighborhood Association, Green Trust SF – Central Waterfront**

*GTSFCW.org; pier70.org/dogpatch*

Like North Beach, Dogpatch (3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Indiana, Mariposa to Tubbs) has Victorians and a Muni storage yard, proximity to the Bay and a pretty high number of drinking and eating establishments per capita. Some of the oldest houses in the City rub against metal-clad business and large industrial buildings converted to residences.

During the boom, an avalanche of cheesy live/work lofts threatened the classic buildings and the laid back, cozy tempo of Dogpatch. Slack times



Dogpatch Victorians

brought no relief, as clothing manufacturer Esprit made plans to sell off its headquarters and the adjacent park. The Dogpatch Neighborhood Association fought to keep the park, shepherding its transfer to the City. By then designer Susan Eslick and her neighbors had decided they needed to not just prevent change but to manage it,

The key, Susan says, was finding local developer Build Inc. who understood the vitality and quality of life in Dogpatch and intended to protect and enhance the neighborhood, not just take their money and run. Build, Inc.'s Principal Loring Sagan credits Susan's objectivity and skills in analysis and communication with helping to broker an outcome that benefited the neighborhood as well as his company and investors.

**Susan's Advice:** Connect, inform, involve, and then urge everyone who gets something out of a neighborhood to give back in return.

*continued on page 26*

# FROM THE DESK OF SUPERVISOR CHIU



I want to wish everyone a very happy holiday season! I hope everyone is doing well, and that you will have an opportunity to slow down and enjoy time with family and friends. Much continues to happen at City Hall and throughout District 3; here are some highlights:

## **Tour Buses**

In recent months, our office has received numerous complaints about tour buses in North Beach and throughout the city. While tourism is vitally important to San Francisco, neighbors and merchants have raised concerns about tour bus noise, pollution, safety and parking. I have convened several meetings on the topic, bringing MTA staff and key tour bus operators together with neighbors and merchants. We have discussed issues and potential solutions to address tour buses on residential streets such as Mason and Chestnut, open-top tour bus operators using loudspeakers, and a lack of signage that informs bus operators where they cannot park. We are also researching legislation to step up penalties for excessive idling, and thank the tour bus operators participating in our meetings for being “on board” with that proposal. We will continue to work on this issue to make North Beach as inviting and pleasant for our residents as it is for our tourists.

## **Discretionary Review**

The San Francisco City Charter vests our Planning Commission with discretionary powers to review the potential effect of any permit on surrounding properties and residents. The ability to file for a Discretionary Review (“DR”) has been an important tool for neighbors and neighborhood associations to address projects that would have a

detrimental effect on a neighborhood. In District 3, DRs have been filed sparingly in recent years. District 3 residents have filed the second fewest number of appeals of any district in the city. Responding to cases in which the DR process was used to hold up otherwise appropriate projects, the Planning Department recently advocated reforms to the DR process. The Department has proposed allowing the Commission to delegate its DR powers to a newly-created Planning Department “Residential Design Team,” with the power to deny DR requests that are not heard by the Planning Commission.

I support proposals to otherwise reform the department’s internal review process. In fact, the department has recently made important changes to their internal Discretionary Review process to reduce frivolous claims. That being said, I also support a trial period for the department’s own reforms to function before considering more permanent legislative changes to the current structure. I want to thank the many neighborhood leaders, including those from Telegraph Hill Dwellers, who have weighed in on this important legislation.

## **Garage Legislation**

All District 3 residents know that housing is extremely scarce and expensive. As residents in the densest neighborhoods west of the Mississippi, most of us understand that replacing housing with parking squanders a precious resource. Recently, numerous garage permit applications have been filed for buildings where families have been evicted from their unit to make way for a garage in its place. To address this issue, I have recently proposed legislation requiring

*continued on next page*

## From the Desk of Supervisor Chiu

anyone who wishes to build a garage in a residential property to obtain conditional use authorization from the Planning Commission. As currently drafted, the legislation would deny authorization for a garage permit for properties where certain types of evictions have been executed. The legislation is being reviewed by the Planning Department, and will be considered by the Board in the coming months.

### Budget, Budget, Budget

During this past summer, the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor passed a budget that balanced a \$438M budget deficit for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, and I know many of our residents have already felt the impact of budget cutbacks for this fiscal year. Unfortunately, with revenues continuing to

slide, not only does the City have to balance a \$45M mid-year 2009-2010 deficit, but projections show that we will now have another \$522M budget deficit to balance for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. These are unprecedented numbers, and will require unprecedented decisions by City Hall.

For the November 2009 ballot, I spearheaded the successful Proposition A campaign, which will now require multi-year budgeting and longer-term financial planning. While Prop A will hopefully force our city to address structural budget issues head-on and not defer our budget problems into subsequent years, we will need to continue to reform city government, find new solutions and make deep cuts to programs and services. I welcome any and all ideas you may have in this regard. ✂

## PARKS, TREES, & BIRDS REPORT

by Judy Irving

**Greenwich Steps:** In November, certified arborist Ian Butler completed the second THD project in the Greenwich Steps right-of-way: removal of vines and

“fire ladders” (extremely flammable dead lower branches) from two large deodar cedars. Funding was provided by the Valetta Heslet Garden Fund of the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy. DPW collaborated by sending their “chipper” the day after the pruning to chip, then haul away plant debris.

**Coit Tower:** The Forest Management project took a great leap forward in early October, when view corridors were opened up through the Monterey cypress grove. Now those areas have been prepped and planted with native shrubs, grasses, and vines such as lizard tail and Oregon grape. The plants are surrounded by netting that resembles giant burlap, and the gardeners have placed baffles across the hillside—all to prevent erosion on Telegraph Hill’s steep rocky slope.



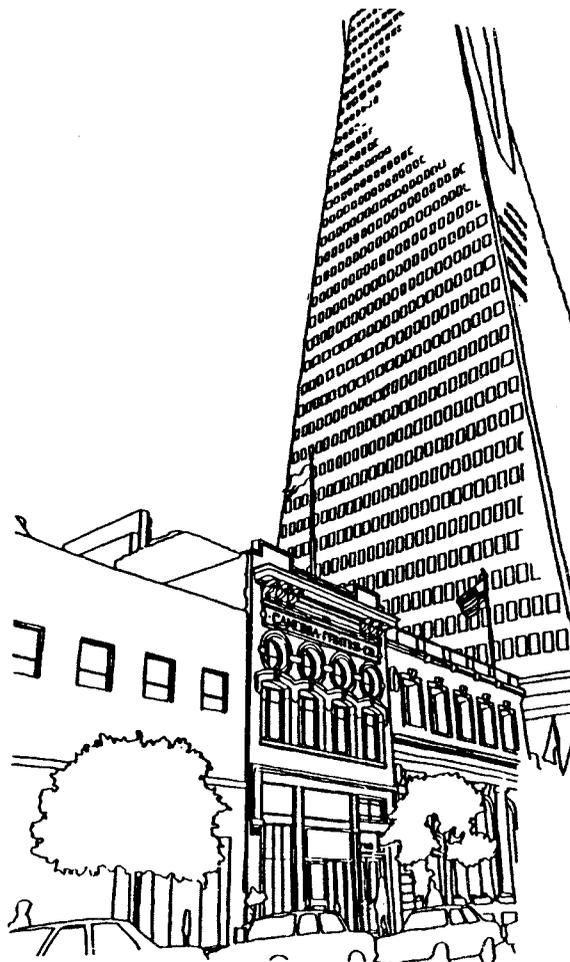
New view corridors will support native plants

*continued on page 29*

PHOTO BY MERLE GOLDSTONE



**Gail Switzer Welcomes New THD Member**  
At "Trunk or Treat," an event sponsored by Tel-Hi, a new THD member gave out candy to children at the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' "float" at Joe DiMaggio Playground on Halloween. Gail Switzer provided the car. Merle Goldstone, Tom Noyes, and David Smolen joined Gail in decorating it with cobwebs, skeletons and creepy crawly creatures. It was loads of fun to see all the North Beach families in costume. We gave out a lot of candy, and ate some ourselves!



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# NORTH BEACH ICONS: A LITTLE OLDER, A LITTLE BETTER

By Ernest Beyl

**N**orth Beach, to paraphrase Hemingway, is a moveable feast. Yes, the old neighborhood is changing—“evolving” might be a better word—and that’s good. But some things don’t change; and that’s good too. North Beach hosts many of the oldest business establishments in San Francisco, treasured icons that are only improving with age.

Here are some classics. There are others to be sure, but these have been researched recently.

## Fior d’Italia

Opening on Broadway in 1886 on the ground floor of an upstairs brothel, Fior d’Italia is believed to be the oldest continuously operating Italian restaurant in the U.S. In 1893, when that building burned to the ground, the restaurant moved nearby until, in the great earthquake and fire of April 1906, it burned again. Fior soon reopened, however—this time in a tent. The night before the ’06 catastrophe the incomparable Italian tenor Enrico Caruso had dined at Fior d’Italia. He fled the city the next day and never returned.



The restaurant continued at various Broadway locations until 1953 and then made a jump to Union and Stockton, remaining there until a devastating fire closed it in 2004. The following year it moved into the ground floor of the San Remo Hotel on Mason.

For more than 30 years now, Chef Gianni Audieri from Milan has been serving up the more than 90 Northern Italian dishes on the menu.

The restaurant’s ownership also has been remarkably stable. During most of its existence there have been only four sets of owners: the original Angelo Del Monte family from Genoa, four Marianetti brothers from Lucca and later Achille Panteleoni, also from Lucca. In 1990, Bob Larive, a long-time restaurant executive, his wife Jinx and a silent partner, took over. These days Fior d’Italia, like other establishments, is being hit hard by the perilous economic times. Bob Larive is up front about this in his comments: “These times are difficult. We are operating on an almost day to day basis—almost all restaurants are feeling pain. Although it’s to everyone’s advantage to keep the old North Beach merchants in business, frankly, we don’t get much support from nearby residents.”

## Molinari’s

Perhaps no other institution represents the heady essence of North Beach better than Molinari’s Delicatessen. Since its origin in 1896 the business has been located at the corner of Columbus and Vallejo. This enduring institution is presided over by Joe Mastrelli, third generation Italian-American. The young *capo* proclaims that Molinari’s is not only the oldest delicatessen in San Francisco, but the oldest west of the Rockies. No simple neighborhood deli, it carries more than a thousand Italian *delicatzes* (delicacies)—fine cheeses, homemade pastas, sauces, olive oils, vinegars, sausages and “cased meats”



*continued on next page*

such as salami, *zampino*, *coppa*, *mortadella*, *galantina* and *sopresetta*.

Molinari's Delicatessen is the legacy of two Italian families—the Molinaris and the Mastrellis—both from Italy's *Piedmonte* region, high on the map's Italian-booted leg. The Molinaris immigrated to San Francisco in the 1800s, first opening a sausage factory and then the delicatessen. Alfred Mastrelli, Joe Mastrelli's grandfather, came to the city in 1908, joining the Molinaris. In 1962 Bob Mastrelli, Joe's father, took over the operation. Retired now, he is still a partner in the business. Today Joe runs the delicatessen and his friend Frank Giorgi, another third-generation Italian-American, heads up P.G. Molinari & Son south of the city where they make sausages and "cased meats" sold in Molinari's delicatessen.

### Victoria Pastry Company

Victoria Pastry Company at Stockton and Vallejo has operated since 1914 and still uses the same brick oven. It was founded by two Sicilian brothers. These heroes will have to remain unsung. No one at Victoria—which was named after one of the brother's daughters—can come up with their names. The bakery still uses original Sicilian recipes. Favorites include: *Tiramisu*, a delicate pastry layered with *zabaglione* and flavored with rum, and *Cannoli*, crisp pastry shells filled with sweetened ricotta cheese and chocolate chips.

Today Victoria is owned and operated by Susan Flaherty and Dino Belluomini who acquired it in 1994. A few years ago the pair decided to stretch out and purchased Stella Bakery on Columbus. Stella's, which opened in 1945, is the home of the ethereal white sponge cake called Sacripantina, flavored with *maraschino* liqueur, a bit of rum, with *zabaglione* spread among its multi layers.

The story goes that there was a baker in Genoa who made this incredible cake. It seems that the wife of a Genovese nobleman wanted to present her hus-

band with a new dessert to gain his increased ardor (a sensible enough idea). So she created a special cake for him. The nobleman took one bite and cried out "Sacripantina!" which we are asked to believe is idiomatic Italian for something like "Holy Smoke."

Susan traces her interest in bakeries and baking to an early internship at the famous, but long-gone San Francisco bakery Fantasia where she learned to make and decorate Belgian chocolate Easter eggs. Dino began his career as a dishwasher at (where else?) Stella's. He worked there five years and emerged as a baker.

### Liguria

That addictive flatbread Italians call *focaccia* is one of several sound reasons to live in North Beach. And in North beach *focaccia* means Liguria Bakery operated at the corner of Filbert and Stockton by the Soracco family—father George, mother Josephine, daughter Mary and sons Michael and Daniel.

This is a tale of an immigrant family of bakers from Genoa, port city of the province of Liguria in northwest Italy. It was grandfather Ambrogio and his brother Joseph who led the Soraccos to San Francisco back in 1910. The following year Ambrogio opened Liguria Bakery on the corner of Stockton and Filbert. It still operates with the original brick-lined oven.

Originally the Soraccos made not only *focaccia*, which they sold for about 25 cents a sheet, but also sourdough loaves, *biscotti*, *panattone* and *grissini*. At various times the Soraccos also sold eggs, butter, milk and blocks of ice. They provided delivery service to nearby houses and restaurants by horse-drawn carriage. Gradually *focaccia* dominated the business and Liguria became a one product operation. To many in North Beach, Liguria *focaccia* is a commodity, a household staple.

Baking starts at about 5am. Although the Soraccos are secretive about the exact ingredients, measurements and methods they employ, it will

*continued on next page*

## North Beach Icons *cont'd from page 12*

reveal nothing to report that flour, yeast, water, canola and olive oil and “some spices” go into making this exquisite flatbread. Then the *focaccia* is rolled out and placed into flat pans and drizzled with olive oil and coarse salt. The pans are slid into the oven which has been heated the night before to 800 to 900 degrees Fahrenheit and the sheets of focaccia are baked for ten to fifteen minutes.

For those with a *focaccia* passion, it's a good idea to get to Stockton and Filbert early. Frequently there is a line that stretches around the corner and up Filbert. When Liguria sells out, that's it. The CLOSED sign goes up on the door and the day is over.

### Little City Market

In the old days, let's say around the 1940s, there were half a dozen or so Italian butcher shops in North Beach. Today Little City Market is the only one in the neighborhood and one of the few, old-fashioned, independent butcher shops in the city. Higher rents, labor costs, dwindling profit margins, all took their toll. Add the rise of the ubiquitous supermarkets with the self-service, shrink-wrapped meats, poultry and fish—and their shrink-wrapped prices—and you will understand what made the independent butcher shops seem superfluous. Many of the old butchers retired and their offspring preferred other career paths.

But Little City Market, under its current proprietor Ron Spinali, just keeps rolling along. What's the secret to its longevity?

Little City is an informal neighborhood clubhouse for those who like good food and like to chat

about it. It just happens to sell top quality meats—select beef (corn-fed steaks), pork, “rose” and “white” veal, chicken and eggs and other products like hand-made Sicilian and Calabrese sausages from old family recipes.

In 1941, Ron Spinali's father George opened Little City. The Spinali family is from Sicily. Patriarch Luciano Spinali came to San Francisco at the turn of the century, joining a long line of Sicilian immigrants who became fishermen. He operated his own fishing boat at Fisherman's Wharf. But his son, George Spinali, broke with tradition and became a meat cutter, working for Buon Gusto, a long-gone Italian market. A generous but frugal man, George Spinali saved his money and opened Little City Market on Green Street. It remained there until 1951 when he moved to the present site at the corner of Stockton and Vallejo.

When George Spinali died in 1972, Little City Market went to Ron who had worked for his father since he was eight. Ron in turn, brought his son, Michael, into the operation when he was 16.

Along with the select meat products and unique Italian sausages, Little City features a variety of other items, none more important than the house *demi-glace*, the intense veal-bone stock, reduced to its essence over hours of simmering, that Ron and Mike produce on the premises. “A little *demi*,” Ron says “adds a richness and body to almost any dish.”

Ron's reference to “richness” and “body” might serve as a closing text for this article. For it is the long-standing establishments described here that contribute most mightily to the richness and body that is our North Beach landscape

Buon Gusto!

*Ernest Beyl is a North Beach writer and frequent contributor to Semaphore. He refers to himself as “an aspiring gourmand” and patronizes the classic North Beach establishments profiled in this article.*



# THD CELEBRATES NON-PROFIT AQUARIUM

By Katie Hopkins

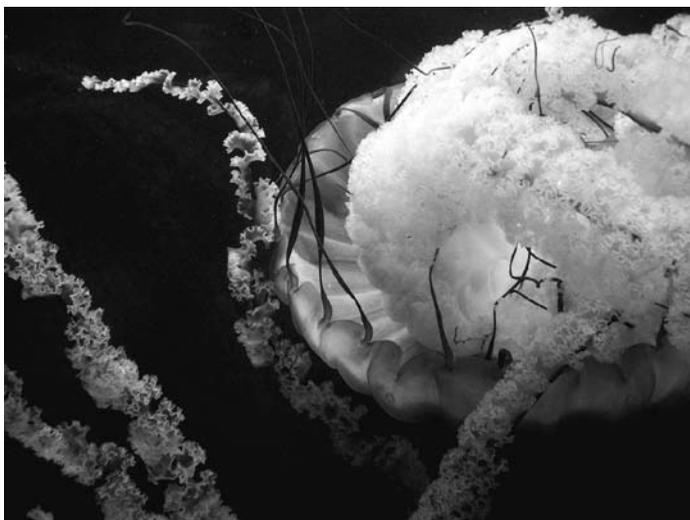
**O**n September 28th, more than fifty Telegraph Hill Dwellers gathered for a membership meeting at the Aquarium of the Bay near Fisherman's Wharf. John Frawley, President and CEO of the Aquarium, gave an inspirational talk during which we learned of the Aquarium's 13-year transition from a failing commercial business to a fully accredited, successful marine nature center. After this introduction, we were treated to a private tour of the amazing center and got to know (and touch) some of our thousands of neighbors in the bay.

The Aquarium of the Bay became a nonprofit marine nature center in June of this year. With contributions from many individual donors, corporations and foundations, the Aquarium was able to develop into a 65,000 square foot facility. It features 300 feet of crystal clear acrylic tunnels holding over 700,000

gallons of filtered Bay water. So, you can get up close and personal with more than 20,000 marine animals from the San Francisco Bay and nearby waters. Sharks, bat rays, octopi, jelly fish, skates, eels, invertebrates, and local fish species create an experience that inspires conservation of the San Francisco Bay and other marine environments.

Although it's amazing to observe an abundant array of creatures, the Bay and its watershed is in trouble. The Aquarium's goal is for every visitor to come away with new knowledge about the life dwelling within the Bay, as well as what can be done to help preserve it.

So, make sure to stop by and introduce yourself to our buddies beyond the beach. Who knows? Maybe next year we'll change the "Parks, Trees, and Birds" Committee to "Parks, Trees, Birds, and Marine Animals" Committee... what do you think, Judy Irving? ✦



Dale Chumley, eat your heart out: Jellies on display at the Aquarium by the Bay. PHOTO BY JULIE JAYCOX



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# BOB WATKE RECEIVES DWELLERS' 2009 BEAUTIFICATION AWARD

by Merle Goldstone

The recipient of the 2009 Telegraph Hill Dwellers' Beautification Award will come as no surprise to anyone who walks or drives up Union Street on a regular basis. At the organization's September 28th membership meeting, the award was presented to Bob Watke, the tall, lanky and silver-haired gentleman who can usually be found sweeping the sidewalk at Kearny and Union Street, keeping the intersection spotlessly clean.

A Telegraph Hill resident of 25 years, Bob has lived with his wife Donna in their condominium overlooking this well-traveled corner since 1997.

Since retiring, Bob has made it his business to keep his neighborhood clean. Asked how his campaign began, he recalled, "When we moved in, the street was trashy looking and I had the time to do something about it."

Sweeping up litter and removing graffiti in an ever expanding area has become the mission of this former marketing executive, who loves living in San Francisco and North Beach in particular, but thinks the City needs cleaning up. Not content to sweep his own sidewalk, Bob picks up litter and trash on his entire block, sweeping Sonoma Alley as well. "If you don't stay on top of it, it'll just pile up on you," he says.

Bob's pet peeves: neighbors who put mattresses, sofas and chairs in front of their places and don't call

for pickup...and the free newspapers and magazines that are flung on the sidewalks. Somewhere, somebody's always littering and the wind blows the trash up the street.

So Bob is on the job all hours of the day, sweeping, calling 311 to get City services, and making sure that the neighborhood looks pristine. "I'm one of those types who like to be busy all the time."

"As soon as he gets up in the morning, he's out there cleaning the street", Donna chimes in.

Traveling is Bob's other passion, but neighbors need not worry that things will go downhill when he is away. Bob and Donna's son Mark stays in their place and he does the sweeping. Like father, like son!

"I hope I've inspired others to get involved in cleaning the neighborhood," says Bob, who noted that some of his neighbors have taken up sweeping too. "My neighbor Brad does a good job up the street."

Next time you see Bob or Brad out there sweeping, give them some love. ✦

*(The author of this article is an employee of the Department of Public Works and helps to coordinate the Adopt-A-Street volunteer program. Adopt-A-Street supports the efforts of volunteers like Bob Watke by providing free brooms, dustpans, leaf and litter bags and litter bag pickup. For more information about volunteering, call 311.)*



Bob and Donna Watke. PHOTO BY MERLE GOLDSTONE

# BEFORE THE CASTRO: NORTH BEACH A GAY MECCA

by Dick Boyd – Author of “Broadway North Beach: The Golden Years”

This story has been a blast from the past for me. From 1948 through the 50’s I was a habitué of North Beach. I hit many of the watering holes in this story. In 1955, I was a Grey Line Tour Guide for their Night Club tours that made stops at Finocchio’s, the Gay Nineties and La Casa Dora, all on Broadway. In 1960 I became a partner in Pierre’s Bar at 546 Broadway.

During these years I was an observer of, if not regularly a participant in, the homophobic behavior of the time. In the 40’s and 50’s and into the early 60’s, gay guys were called either “fairies,” “homos,” “fags,” or “queers.” Lesbians were called “butches” or “bull dykes.” Homophobia reigned. A post WWII “macho” culture prevailed. It was that way in high school and college in both athletics and fraternity life. In fact, the fraternity that a group of my friends and I started in 1948 at San Francisco State, “black balled” (no pun intended), some years after our departure,

Johnny Mathis, not because of his race, but because of his sexual orientation. The irony here is that at our founding we had applied for a national charter but declined it after we learned of the national’s racial and religious stipulations. We called ourselves Alpha Zeta Sigma and to us that meant we welcomed everyone from A to Z. But by the mid-fifties that founding principle had been forgotten.

I was going to all kinds of places in North Beach in the late 40’s and early 50’s. I don’t recall being asked for an ID. My favorite two places were Vesuvio and 12 Adler. In the late 40’s, I was usually with the boys and the focus was on drinking and stories. In the early 50’s I began hitting Broadway for the girls. I did notice that 12 Adler was laden with Butches as well as some foxy ladies. I was running on pure testosterone, so I only focused on the foxes. I don’t recall whether or not I made a convert, but I do remember trying. I never counted how many times I struck out. I just kept stepping up to the plate.

Later at Pierre’s we had a few surprising gay experiences. Our Schlitz beer salesman said he belonged to the Mattachine Society (a gay political organization formed in the 1930’s lobbying for gay rights). My partner and I never had a clue what it was, and the guy was anything but swishy. Dave Kopay was one of the 49ers that came in on Sundays after 49er games then played at Kezar Stadium. His nickname in training camp was “Animal.” He was the first professional football player to “come out” publicly, a very courageous act at the time. Bill Paul, who was our bouncer for two years (1962 to 1964) and left to train for the US Judo team, becoming captain of



James MacGuiness, pianist, Black Cat, 1965

*continued on next page*

## North Beach Gay Mecca *continued from page 16*

the 1964 Olympic team in Tokyo, came out a few years later. He became president of the Stonewall Gay Democratic Club. He died in 1988 from a brain tumor associated with the HIV virus.

Now to the story. I have focused on five clubs that best exemplify a cross section of gay/lesbian establishments at the time.

**Tommy's Joint, 299 Broadway, 1948 to 1952, Tommy's Place, 529 Broadway, 1952 to 1954** (Now the Garden of Eden)—Tommy Vasu was the first known lesbian to legally own a bar in San Francisco. When out on the town she dressed like a man in double-breasted suits, wide tie and a fedora hat. She used the men's room, had a beautiful blond girlfriend and loved to gamble. In short, she was a risk taker. She often came into Pierre's for high stakes prearranged liar's dice games with artist/entrepreneur Walter Keane.

The 299 Broadway site was where businessmen

from the nearby financial district could find a willing hooker out of sight of prying eyes at places like Paoli's. Stevedores from the docks close by also partook of the hookers on payday. The hookers were the girlfriends of the butches who hung out there.

Adjoining Tommy's Place was 12 Adler (now Specs) accessible by a back staircase. It was a lesbian pick-up rendezvous. Upstairs was entertainment pretty much by whoever cared to perform. During a purge of gay bars in the early 50's, 12 Adler lost its liquor license in what appeared to outsiders as a set-up. Drugs were found taped to the drain under the sink in the ladies room.

Tommy ran the Broadway Parking concession and was around Broadway until the mid 60's. Tommy's high maintenance blond was a heroin addict and Tommy became a dealer to supply her needs. She got busted and sent to Tehachapi where she was murdered shortly after her release.

**The Paper Doll, 1949 to 1961**—Located on Cadell Place just off Union was a gay bar/restaurant. It was owned by New Pisa restaurant owner and North Beach baseball legend Dante Benedetti. I lived around the corner on Grant and ate there frequently. The food was excellent. You could get a steak with all the trimmings for \$1.65. I could even afford to tip at those prices.

In the late 1950's and early 60's the Paper Doll held Halloween parties overflowing down Union and up to Grant. There was a contest held for the best costume and drag queens came from as far away as New York to compete for the crown.

Dante got busted in the same purge of gay bars as Tommy Vasu.

*continued on next page*



Jeannie Sullivan & Tommy Vasu (far right) taken at Mona's.

He pursued appeals but finally lost the battle in 1961. Later the place became the Manhattan Towers, owned by Katherine James, and leaned more towards a lesbian pick-up place.

**The Black Cat, 710 Montgomery, 1933 to 1963** (Now Bocado's)—A Bohemian hang-out located right across from “The Monkey (read Montgomery Street) Block Building,” home of Bohemian legends William Saroyan, Benny Bufano and Enrico Banducci. They, along with socialites, gays and “butches” cruising for new talent, bikers, the curious and college kids like myself looking for a cheap meal, could be seen there. On a Sunday morning you could cure a hangover with a great breakfast and a couple of Bloody Marys for under \$3 bucks.

In 1949, straight Black Cat owner Sol Stouman took the issues of identifying and serving homosexuals to court (*Stouman vs Reilly*) and won. George Reilly was the head of the Board of Equalization

(BOE), which at the time was in charge of enforcement and taxation. This was before the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and enforcement at bars and clubs was hazy at best. The SFPD was saying that the Black Cat was attracting undesirables and Stouman was being harassed and threatened with closure by the SFPD, the BOE and later the ABC. For help, Stouman formed the San Francisco Tavern Guild, which became the first gay bar association and still functions to this day. However, the reformers (SFPD and the State Legislature) were relentless in their legal efforts and eventually, after new legislation, the courts overturned the earlier ruling which forced the Black Cat to close October 30th, 1963, after a 14 year legal struggle.

**The Beige Room, 831 Broadway, 1949 to 1958** (Now the Woo Yee Children's Services)—Strictly gay, it featured female impersonators who were mostly gay. Unlike Finocchio's it was not a tourist trap and gay men felt more comfortable hanging out there. Also unlike Finocchio's, where owner Joe Finocchio forbade such socialization for fear of losing his liquor license, the openly gay performers often socialized with the customers. This often led to wild after hour parties. Many of San Francisco's high society were to be seen there on special occasions, one of which was the Tavern Guild's Beau Arts Ball, which like the Halloween event at the Paper Doll, was all about the costumes featured by the drag queens. The establishment even had its own columnist Henry Diekow who called himself Baroness Von Dieckoff and called his column “Bag-a-Drag-by the Bay” mimicking Herb Caen's column “Baghdad-by-the-Bay”.

**Mona's, 440 Broadway, 1939 to 1948**—Lesbian Pick-up and Male Impersonators. Women dressed like men and entertained customers.

Mona Sargent and then husband Jimmie started the biz right after the repeal of Prohibition at 451



Front of Mona's 1945

*continued on page 23*

# THE INVASION OF THE TESTAROSSAS

by Paul Kohler

The high school marching band pauses at the apex of Columbus and Stockton, obediently following their majorette. The drummers at the back enforce a rhythmic stationary march, “Boom... Boom... Boom...” The black furry Busby helmets, feather plumes, jackets with epaulets, sashes and white gloves unify the teenagers into one unit. Now the majorette blows her whistle and the woodwinds, brass and percussion follow in unison past North Beach Restaurant and down the gradual decline past Victorian buildings, Caffè Delucchi, Mangarosa, Caffè Roma, Tony’s Pizza Napoletana and Café Divine to the majestic Washington Square Park.

The sidewalks are packed with enthusiastic supporters who clap with appreciation, while proud relatives of the band members wave and shout their

names and bored younger siblings wrestle on the sidewalk curb. The sky is blindingly bright blue with wisps of slowly moving clouds, colors so sharp and powerful they strain the eyes. The majorette twirls her baton with increasing speed and launches it into the vast sky. Like a slow moving bolero the parade route snakes its way from Fisherman’s Wharf through North Beach, Chinatown and back to North Beach, ending at the Washington Square in front of Saints Peter and Paul Church.

But during all this activity neighborhood denizens and even tourists are at sea. Café regulars at Trieste, Puccini and Roma are thrown off their routines and established territorial seating arrangements no longer hold. The typical tourist activities are given a rest. The amphibious vehicle Bay Quackers Duck

*continued on page 29*



# A NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVED

Text and photos by Howard Wong

*“Little boxes on the hillside, Little boxes made of ticky tacky, Little boxes on the hillside, Little boxes all the same.”*

—Malvina Reynolds, Song Lyrics (1962).

Fortunately, and not accidentally, North Beach and Telegraph Hill’s little boxes aren’t all the same. In sync with topography and the area’s natural beauty, our manmade milieu is shaped by neighborhood activism, civic pride, urban design/planning principles and historic preservation standards.

Incrementally, buildings and sites have been added to the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources. And City-designated landmarks in North Beach represent temporal markers that enrich the feel of the urban composition.

In November 2008, Proposition J created the Historic Preservation Commission, whose mission is in keeping with the desire of the citizens that historically-significant sites and high-quality architecture should be professionally evaluated and the best preserved.

Gradually over time, historically and architecturally significant buildings create the urban texture and soul that define a unique society. San Francisco’s essence includes venerable historic resources, which need to be honored and their value protected for the enjoyment of visitors, residents, families, and children. There are some buildings, many renovated for new uses, that deserve our attention.

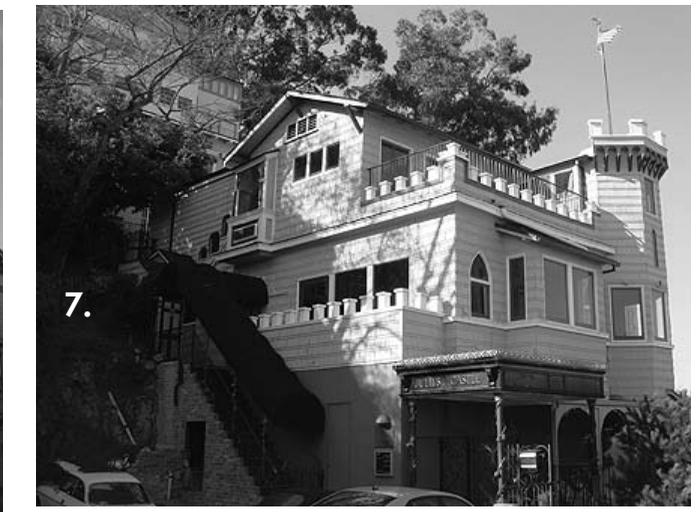


1. City I  
Broad
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Lights Bookstore (1907), 261 Columbus at  
 way  
 & Schwitzer Malting Company (1906-1908), 550  
 nut at Mason

5. Beltline Railroad Roundhouse Complex (1914-1918),  
 Sansome at the Embarcadero and Lombard  
 6. Columbus Tower (Sentinal Building) (1907), 916-20  
 Kearney at Columbus



7. Julius' Castle (1923, 1928), 302-304 Greenwich at  
 Montgomery  
 8. North Beach Branch Library (1958), 2000 Mason at  
 Columbus ❖

# THE CHANGING FACE OF NORTH BEACH ITALIAN RESTAURANTS



By Carol Peterson

PULCINELLA, 641 Vallejo St., San Francisco 94133

415.829.7312 ★ ★ ★ ½

Folks in North Beach know good Italian food and won't settle for less. That's why I was excited to find another extraordinary Italian restaurant joining the ranks of Sodini's, E Tutto Qua, Vicoletto and Albona. This eatery, featuring the cuisine of Naples, is Pulcinella, located in the 600 block of Vallejo St. The restaurant's name derives from the *comedia del arte* character associated with Naples, and a rendering of the character Pulcinella, executed by the local artist Vranas, dominates this wall mural.

After a first visit to the restaurant, I knew I wanted to write a review to share my enthusiasm for this new establishment. I met the owner's cousin, Dario, and arranged to come back, taste some specialties, and interview the owner Luigi Pucci, a name I did not recognize.

But when I actually met this Luigi I was in for a big surprise: The man looked at me and I looked at him. We smiled and said at the same time, "I know you!" Standing in front of me was the head waiter from E Tutto Qua that always made me feel like I was the most special person to ever come to the restaurant. I knew he had left E Tutto Qua—with Enzo's blessings – but I didn't know where he had gone. A Neapolitan native, Luigi brings with him all the recipes from his family, which happens to own a prominent Italian flour company. Here's an account of some of the excellent food we sampled.

As an appetizer, the hit was the imported 16-month-aged prosciutto and creamy mozzarella cheese. The salty prosciutto complimented the mild, creamy cheese. This simple but wonderful dish,

which can be shared by two, was embellished with a pinch of sea salt and freshly crushed pepper. Another must-taste was the arugula salad with seared scallops so fresh they could have come right out of the tank. Diners can expect this kind of consistent freshness at Pulcinella because Luigi shops every day at the Farmer's Market for vegetables, fruit and fish. The scallops were perfectly grilled, with the outside seared and the inside moist and tender.

My favorite pasta dish was a new experience for me: Fagottini cacao e pere, which translates to pasta filled with pears and cheese in a perfect blend of slightly sweet and salty butter and sage sauce. If you have never had a dish with sage leaves cooked in butter, you are in for a new treat. All the flavors fit exquisitely together.

I tasted a few main course dishes. All of the meat is free-range and very tender and flavorful, but my favorite dish was the fish of the day. It was a perfectly grilled piece of salmon. Arranged on the top was a tiny salad, with a light simple dressing of olive oil and lemon. The fish could have been eaten with a white plastic fork it was so tender. A slight smattering of small roasted potatoes and summer vegetables, perfectly steamed, complimented the fish. This dish is very uncomplicated but such a pleasure.

Luigi's brother Fabio makes all the pizzas, which are truly Neapolitan style and, of course, made with their family's flour. Fabio studied pizza-making at a famous school in Naples, and worked in the family's restaurant there before bringing his talent here.

For desert we had the most amazing amaretto creamed iced dish that featured caramel and nut sauce. I asked Luigi if he had concocted this recipe,

*continued on next page*

## North Beach Gay Mecca *continued from page 18*

Union Street (1933 to 1935), on the corner of Varennes, between Grant and Kearney (now the Diamond Nail Waxing). In 1936 they moved to 140 Columbus (now the Purple Onion). In 1939 they moved to 440 Broadway. It was actually opened by Charlie Murray as the “440” but he soon brought in Mona as a partner and it became “Mona’s 440.” Often men had to front for lesbians in bars and clubs in order to get the approval of the Board of Equalization for their liquor license. Mona’s flourished during WWII and the Korean War. It was a favorite with lesbians but even with servicemen as it was not “off-limits.” Tourist loved it for its entertainment but also knew they might be able to connect with someone of the same sex which could not happen back home.

It became Ann’s 440 Club in the mid fifties run by Ann Dee. Johnny Mathis sang there under the tutelage of Ann who helped him with his stage presence. Lenny Bruce appeared there when his act was more New York Jewish humor than the anger he later fell into in his performances. Ann gave a lot of aspiring performers a chance to get on stage and worked with and helped train them.

Looking back from a perspective of close to 50 years, it’s easy to see how the mix of artsy bohemianism, tolerance and low rents made for an environment that allowed the gay lifestyle to prosper. All these ingredients are still in place in our neighborhood—except

for maybe the low rents.



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## Pulcinella Restaurant *continued from page 22*

but he told me it is a traditional dessert from Naples. It was one of the best desserts I have had in North Beach.

While talking with the very charming Luigi, he told me, “I care when people come back and they are doing that. What I really want to do is change the image of Italian food in North Beach for the tourists and serve the locals in the neighborhood, like you

were sitting in our home eating dishes that have been prepared by our family for generations.”

Welcome, Luigi and family. You and the proprietors of the other excellent restaurants I’ve mentioned above are upgrading the quality of Italian cuisine in North Beach. I can see it happening, and it is so exciting.



## Other Gay and Lesbian Establishments

**Artists Club**—345 Pacific Ave, 1946–1949: Now a parking lot. Lesbian pick-up place.

**The Anxious Asp**—528 Green Street—Bohemian/Lesbian, 1958–1967: Opened and owned by Arlene Arbuckle

**Blanco's Tavern**—905 Kearny St., (Manilatown) Female impersonators, mostly gay Filipino men, and pick-up place, 1943 to mid 1950's: Run by **Kay Blanco** (half Filipino and Caucasian and a lesbian)—owned by her father. It is now the "**Grassland Cocktail Lounge**."

**The Chi Chi**—467 Broadway, Night Club, 1949–1956: Gay & Lesbian friendly, owned by Andy and Ted Marefos. Eventually became the **Pink Elephant** and then by 1966 became the **Club Fuji**.

**The Capri** aka **The Kiwi**—1326 Grant Avenue, Lesbian bar, pick-up place, 1964–1972. Now the **Royale North Beach Bar**.

**Cargo West**—1105 Battery, Restaurant/Night Club, 1968–1976: Ironically now "**Retail West**", a commercial real estate business. They had never heard of the Cargo West.

**The Colony Club**—711 Pacific, 1965–1976: Lesbian, now the Ping Yuen Tenants Association, a San Francisco Housing Authority project for Chinese.

**Copper Lantern**—1335 Grant Ave, 1955–1965: Lesbian, opened by Lisa and Mike, two former **Paper Doll** waitresses. It somehow survived the anti-gay purge of the Christopher regime and in the 60's they tried Go Go dancers for a while. In 1966 it became the "**Crown Room**" for an undetermined period. This location is now "Chong's Barber and Beauty Shop."

**Jackson's**—2237 Powell Street (Next to Caesars Restaurant), Male Bar/Restaurant, 1961–1976: A neighbor told me when they moved out he counted 28 mattresses being tossed out of the second floor window.

**Katie's Opera Bar**—1441 Grant Ave., Bar, 1965–1976: Now the **Blue Sparrow Pilates**.

**La Vie Parisian**—574 Pacific, bar/nightclub, Female Impersonators, 1947–1950.

**Mary's Tower**—1500 Grant corner of Union—Lesbian bar/restaurant—1953 to 1967. Now the **Mea Cines** Ancient and Modern Artifacts.

**Miss Smith's Tea Room**—1353 Grant Ave., 1954–1960, Lesbian pick-up place: Now "**Maggie McGarry's**," the owner was Connie Smith, a former Artists Club waitress.

**Mona's Candle Light Room**—473 Broadway, 1948–1957, Lesbian: owned by Mona Sargent (formerly of Mona's) with partner Wilma Swarts. Later it became the **Club Gala** owned by **Pete Marino**, local Galileo HS boy. Later this location housed the **Jazz Workshop**, **Burp Hollow** and the **Dixie Land Jazz**. These Clubs all "morphed" between 473 and 477 where the **Bamboo Hut** is located today.

**The Tin Angel**—981 Embarcadero, Restaurant/Night Club, Lesbian, 1953–circa 1962: originally opened and owned by amazingly talented artist/poet/raconteur/entrepreneur **Peggy Tolkwatkins**. Peggy, who crossed the gender lines (bi-sexual), later opened up the **Fallen Angel** with **Sally Stanford** at 1144 Pine Street, Sally's old high end House of Prostitution. Peggy hit the Bay Area like a comet but flamed out in 1973 at the age of 51 after living life full speed.

## BOOKS ON THE HILL

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# NEW NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION FOCUSES ON INDEPENDENT LIVING

By Teresa Dal Santo

There is a new group in the neighborhood, the North East Exchange Team-SF (NEXT-SF), a group of community activists collaborating to build a multi-generational, not-for-profit coalition of organizations and individuals that will support and enhance independent living for residents in their homes at our end of the city. The group developed from a community dinner in May 2006, when two North Beach residents, excited by the Beacon Hill Village model in Boston (*NYT*, February 2006), began discussing the possibility of creating a similar neighborhood aging-in-place program.

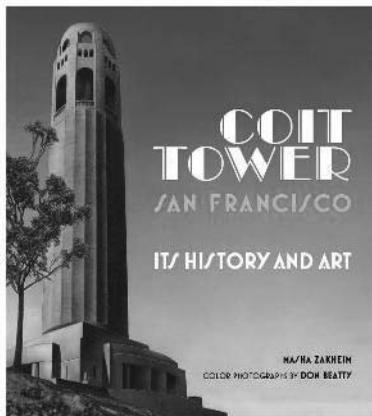
"Villages" are community-based, non-profit organizations that address the growing demand among baby boomers and the elderly to continue living in their own homes among friends and neighbors while also fulfilling their health care needs related to aging. Each Village is customized to local needs and preferences, providing services and discounts on anything from groceries and health care to repairs and transportation assistance. Additionally, Villages organize a host of social activities. To date, Villages have sprouted up in over 40 communities nationwide.

To date, NEXT-SF has accomplished a great deal relying on the voluntary efforts of our Board and Advisory Committee members. We recently received one of two grants awarded to Northern California aging-in-place projects by NCB Capital Impact <http://www.ncbcapitalimpact.org>.

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Some of NEXT-SF services to be offered include: helping neighbors access and coordinate existing services, arranging social, cultural, and physical activities, helping with home maintenance and repair services, and providing advocacy services.

Services will be provided by both paid professionals and a coordinated volunteer corps. Members may be charged for some services on a sliding scale.

Our goals are nurturing, cultivating and conserving the health and vitality of the neighborhood. You can become a *fan* of the Northeast Exchange Team

*continued on next page*



## Kristine Enea, India Basin Neighborhood Association

*IndiaBasin.org*

India Basin (3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Bay, Hunters Point Naval Shipyard) has landmarks: the Shipwright's

Cottage, near where the Maritime Museum's Alma and Jack London's Snark were built, and the Albion Castle, a stone brewery built in 1870 over a spring that still gushes 10,000 gallons of fresh water a day. It has a generous shoreline, fabulous weather, abundant wildlife and easy access for Silicon Valley commuters in an area scheduled to triple its population in the next 10 years. But, currently, the nearest ATM, newspaper, cup of coffee or library is a mile or more away.

Kristine Enea is a lawyer working with Apple. But back when the dot com bubble burst she found herself laid off and looking for a new view. She wrote a book



India Basin is becoming one of San Francisco's best kept secrets!

about that search, *Time Off! The Upside to Downtime*, that led her to explore the unknown Bay View where she fell so in love with the weather and water that she bought a home on Innes Avenue. Across the way, hugging the glistening Bay at India Basin is a sliver of land, survivor of multiple failed development schemes that

*continued on next page*

## NEXT *continued from page 25*

by donating, or become a *coach* to receive training and provide assistance to your neighbors. If you or someone you know would benefit from being a team *member* or for further information, contact us at [nextsf@gmail.com](mailto:nextsf@gmail.com) or visit our web site at [www.nextsf.org](http://www.nextsf.org) ✦

GRAPHIC BY JOHN MATOS



Northeast EXchange Team



VICOLETTO

ITALIAN RESTAURANT

550 Green St., San Francisco

415.433.5800

## Neighborhood Activists *continued from page 26*

might have turned out any number of ways.

Kristine and her friends at the India Basin Neighborhood Association envision the land revived as a wooden boat harbor, like Seattle's successful Center for Wooden Boats ([cwb.org](http://cwb.org)), with boat building, repair, berthing and lessons; waterfront restaurants; water taxis; the City's best dog park; bike and pedestrian paths; perhaps a performance venue. With fresh water, wind and wave energy and a great climate, it could be a perfectly sustainable community.

**Kristine's advice:** Seek and discover new places. You might fall in love.



### Gillian Gillett, San Jose Guerrero Coalition

[SanJoseGuerrero.com](http://SanJoseGuerrero.com)

The San Jose Guerrero neighborhood straddles the boundaries between two neighborhoods (the Mission and Noe Valley), two supervisorial districts (8 and 9), two police districts (Mission and Ingleside) and 3 major arteries—César

Chávez, San Jose and Guerrero—Cars whiz past the oversized, blank-walled buildings and crumbling surface parking lots along César Chávez, more a corridor than a destination.

Toby Levine, a former neighborhood activist, worked with Mark Leno to tame Guerrero: reducing traffic lanes, creating bike paths, adding traffic signals, limiting turns on red. Gillian Gillett, VP of a small software company and also of the San Jose Guerrero Coalition, has continued Levine's work planting medians and lobbying to be a Pavements-to-Parks trial site. Their work parties started with 100 people, then grew to 400.

The roadway changes have been wonderful, effective and award-winning, but they pale in comparison to the upheavals in store, and Gillian and the Coalition are trying to figure how best to ride the bronco. The current challenge is the what to do about St. Luke's Hospital.

The St. Luke's campus contains City landmark #1, the original Bancroft Library, and the City's first landmarked tree, both adjacent to a totally outmoded and seismically unsafe white elephant hospital tower. The hospital is proposing what the neighborhood views as a double whammy: a new medical building smashed against Victorians and the eventual removal of the old tower, creating another open site along the César Chávez checkerboard.

Gillian and the San Jose Guerrero Coalition have excelled at cooperation with City departments and at securing donations and grants.

**Gillian's advice:** "The average San Franciscan lives here <5 years; so be shameless in encouraging social interactions between neighbors while they're here."



Guerrero Street greening, extending 10 blocks through the Mission.

*continued on page 31*

# WHY NATIVE GARDENS?

by Judy Irving

When I checked the California Native Plant Society's web site to find a succinct answer to this question, there it was on the page for Yerba Buena (San Francisco):

*Natives evolved here, are adapted to our environment and weather and therefore are hardy and drought tolerant. In addition they are beautiful and are excellent support for local wildlife.*

Favoring drought-tolerant plants in a time of extreme water scarcity makes sense, and wildlife-friendly planting with natives has its appeal as well. But I'd always been under the impression that, on the whole, native plants weren't particularly beautiful—that they're more like, well, weeds! I was wrong.

Just scanning the common names of these plants conjures up a variety of colors, forms, and functions: wild lilac, fuchsia, iris, evening primrose, poppy, purple needle grass, yellow bush lupine, wild ginger, mountain strawberry, miner's lettuce, western sword fern, morning glory, pearly everlasting, hummingbird sage, California holly, columbine....

Since I'm not a gardener and generally feel unlucky with plants, I needed to start from scratch if



Oenothera

PHOTO BY PAUL FURMAN

I were to embark on a native plant gardening project. What to plant? When to plant? How to keep the plants alive? (Even though they generally don't need much care, natives can easily be choked out by non-native weeds.) I asked a local native plant expert, Paul Furman, to advise me. Furman is a landscape architect who co-owns an online nursery, Bay Natives, which will actually deliver plants to your door, like a pizza! In early November Paul and I circumambulated Telegraph Hill, looking at existing native plants and talking about gardening possibilities. It was a good time to take the walk, because fall and winter are the best times to garden in San Francisco, not during our dry summers.

Paul made an interesting point as we walked up Lombard Street. "If you're looking for a pretty garden," he said, "plants from Australia or New Zealand are easy and colorful. But if you want your garden to be pretty for people *and* attractive for wildlife, native plants are generally the way to go." Birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife need berries, seeds, fruits, and nectar, and they are often best adapted to the plants that grow here naturally.

Our first stop was at the little pocket park where Lombard turns into Telegraph Hill

*continued on page 36*



Bunch grass at Marconi Park

PHOTO BY JUDY IRVING

## Invasion of the Testarossas *cont'd from page 19*

Tours and the imitation Cable Car Buses don't run. The Segway tours for tourists with their crash helmets and visors have come to a halt.

Washington Square Park, that necessary open space in this most densely populated district in the city, is vacated by the regulars. The dogs who practice their shock and awe on the parks' lawn have to hold it in for the day. Thai Chi practitioners, whose side kicks can prove invaluable in securing a rightful Muni bus seat, are given an exercise break. Recovered and relapsing drunks who debate whether they prefer care or cash while seated on a park bench have to find seats elsewhere. Young lovers who lie out on the lawn retire to their bedrooms.

The reason the park has been vacated has nothing to do with bands or floats or waving politicians in convertibles. Rather the park occupants have made way for 40 plus Ferraris. The Ferraris are displayed on the park's lawn of Kentucky blue, rye and fescue grass. If you aren't used to seeing cars driving and parking on grass and public parks don't be alarmed. These are expert drivers who are seasoned in driving their cars on their own and neighbor's lawns as well as their local parks. If you haven't before seen a Ferrari in North Beach don't be surprised. These cars come from richer climes.

The Ferrari is the top of food chain in motor vehicles. Many of the Ferraris in the park were Testarossas that have maximum performance of 440 horsepower, 6,750 revolutions per minute, 0 to 60 mph in 4.7

seconds, a top speed of 290 kph (180 mph) and fuel economy of 11 miles to the gallon. Such a car costs approximately one quarter million to buy and that doesn't include the super unleaded fuel. Armed with such a car and full Flomax and Viagra prescriptions, a middle-aged American male is unstoppable.

In speed and size the park occupants make a poor showing next to the Testarossa. Squirrels weigh 0.5 lbs and have a top speed of 16 mph. The fastest dog at the Park might reach 25 mph when chasing a ball and weighs 80 lbs. The fastest North Beach human running to catch a bus could hit 20 mph and the fattest might reach 300 lbs. The Telegraph Hill parrots, cherry-headed conures, weigh up to 184 grams and fly as fast as 20 mph. All told, when compared to the super car, it is a pathetic showing by the local residents.

A Testarossa weighs in at 3,320 lbs. That's equal to 33 of those 100 lb. Marina girls kitted out in Bebe, Dolce & Gabbana, fresh mani-pedis, Brazilian wax jobs and People magazine in attendance at another lawn-invading event—the North Beach Festival.

Once the parade comes to an end in front of the church, the cars roar back to life and are driven off the Park, leaving till next year, and the minestrone soup of people return to their normal lives. Ten days after the event much of the Park was roped off to replant grass and is still roped off at the time of writing. Whether it was due to the humans, dogs, squirrels or parrots still needs to be determined. But the Ferraris are pleading not guilty. ❖

*continued from  
page 9*

## PARKS, TREES, & BIRDS REPORT

**Wild Parrots:** The parrots have been hanging out in the eucalyptus trees around Coit Tower in the mornings, but they have also been sighted again in Brisbane, eight miles south of Telegraph Hill! The flock is doing quite well in its adopted urban habitat.

If you see a huge flock flying together, which is rare now, and you happen to have a camera with you, please take a picture, count the dots, and let me know how many birds are in the flock. ❖

# PARKING & TRAFFIC REPORT

by Gail and Paul Switzer

Work continues to further increase the ridership on the #39 Coit bus line. Extending the route at Fisherman's Wharf to Pier 39 should happen this Spring, and we hope that this extension will make the bus more visible to both tourists and residents. Plans for expanding publicity and marketing efforts for the bus are moving ahead with Pier 39 and the Convention & Visitors Bureau working closely with MTA and neighborhood groups. We've also expressed our preference to MTA and Rec & Park for the weekend restricted parking to be ongoing. Before making a decision, Rec & Park is still analyzing the data to determine whether the restricted parking had an effect on their revenues.

Rec & Park is also working on an RFP for a new concessionaire for Coit Tower. When it is developed, staff will consult with neighborhood groups including THD and Friends of Pioneer Park before posting it.



Savemuni.com continues to work to stop the development of the Central Subway. Federal funding for this project has not yet been secured so the organization continues to urge people to write letters. Go to their web site, savemuni.com for more information. MUNI head, Nat Ford appears open to a trial of an alternate plan for improving the Stockton corridor in the interim before the Central Subway is completed.

By the time you read this issue of *Semaphore*, the additional MUNI cuts to routes and schedules will have taken place. MUNI is projecting deficits for at least the next two years and we can expect further service cuts and fare hikes. Savemuni.com is working with SF Tomorrow and other community groups to develop ideas for improving MUNI. ✕

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## Neighborhood Activists

*continued from page 27*

### Dick Morten, Sava Pool, Lake Merced Task Force



LMTF.org

Dick Morten, formerly with Accenture Consulting and the SF Chamber

of Commerce, has a thing about water. Dick was a determined advocate for a new replacement for the aging Sava Pool. The new facility, at 19<sup>th</sup> near Sigmund Stern Grove, is a magnificent landmark in the Sunset. Dick has also put in long hours working to restore and protect Lake Merced (once down to 12' deep, now at 24'), stumping for restoration funding and participating in negotiations to reduce

over-pumping of the supporting aquifer. Now Dick has managed to combine his water-related prowess with his other passion—emergency preparedness (He co-chairs SPUR's Disaster Planning Committee)—in his current efforts on behalf of the City's Auxiliary Water Supply System.



**Dick's advice:** consider the City's water needs now and on an ongoing basis and crosslink and vet all private and City plans to include emergency preparedness components. ✦

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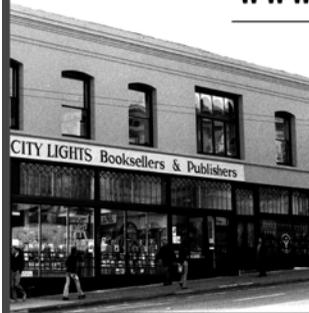
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## NORTH BEACH STREET UTOPIA 2010

is presenting a Free Film Festival on January 9th (Saturday) from 6-9pm at #1 Columbus Avenue. We'll show utopian urban-planning films from green, sustainable, egalitarian, livable cities such as Curitiba (Brazil), Freiburg (Germany), and Portland, Oregon. We'll also display paintings, photos & sculpture by North Beach artists, offer food by street vendors, and present an exhilarating range of North Beach Utopian visions that we want residents to imagine; such as closing off Grant Street to pedestrians only, renaming & remodeling Washington Square to duplicate the grand piazzas of Italy, installation of interactive Fountains & Public Baths, encouragement of street artists & food vendors, enhanced bicycle access, an architecturally-magnificent Public Library, historic footpaths, creative recreation for seniors & children, public beaches at Fisherman's Wharf, planting one thousand trees, extension of Lombard's picturesque "Crooked Street" and a "FarmScrapper" alongside Coit Tower, Plus Any Ideas You Might Have! Event is hosted by Phil Millenbach (city planner) and Hank Hyena (writer, futurist). More info at <http://streetutopia.org>

## YICK WO TO HOLD SILENT AUCTION

by *Bob McMillan*

If you're near Café Sapore (790 Lombard Street at Taylor) during the month of February, drop in and get a preview of Yick Wo's upcoming silent auction that includes art donations from local and celebrated artists. Additionally, our silent auction will have great items such as vacation homes, restaurant gift certificates, fitness memberships and more, all at extremely reasonable prices.

Our Silent Auction & Art Show will be held on March 11, 2010 from 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at The Live Worms Gallery at 1345 Grant Ave.

Yick Wo is a public elementary school on Lombard and Jones Streets that is home to some 250 local children of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. We are a California Distinguished School and National Blue Ribbon School because of our high academic performance.



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# ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Julie Jaycox

## The ArtWalk

This fall, the Art and Culture Committee pulled off a Second Annual rousingly successful North Beach ArtWalk.

This was my first time ever organizing an entire public event. I was completely amazed at the energy and effort that people who volunteered were willing to put out for something they believe is worthwhile!

My diverse committee worked hard to make this a successful event, and because good energy attracts more good energy, we had many new people

offer to help, like Tina Moylan of the Russian Hill Neighbors, and The Medicine Agency, who designed the ArtWalk posters and map pro bono. The ArtWalk after-party was hosted at their businesses on Mason Street. Susan Weisberg drove me to West Oakland the night before to pick up the

ArtWalk maps. Javier Rodriguez spontaneously helped me do a twelfth hour round of map delivery late that night and passed out so many maps over the weekend that every person who walked by my photo display on Sunday already had one in hand (he scored a THD t-shirt for his efforts!). **Thank you, everyone**

involved, for making this a fun and successful event!

And copious thanks especially to the individuals who donated money to help ArtWalk succeed this year.

## A&C Members Exhibit

Nicholas Coley exhibited new paintings at Canessa Gallery during December.

Miriam Owen hosted an extended open studio through December in her Mendocino County studio. [www.studio-tours.com/miriamowen/](http://www.studio-tours.com/miriamowen/).



During THD's Artwalk, artists display work in Kerouac Alley. PHOTO BY JULIE JAYCOX

Canessa Gallery, 708 Montgomery (@ Jackson & Columbus) (We suggest writing [art&culture@thd.org](mailto:art&culture@thd.org) a few days in advance to verify this location for that month or calling 415-392-1768 before the day of the meeting, just to make sure).



**A n d ...**  
Please look for the next Art Salon in February—Art & Culture will send out a membership email to let you know what, when and where

**A n y o n e**  
desiring to attend an Art & Culture meeting can do so at 6pm on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at

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**- JOHN CLEESE**



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## Why Native Gardens? *continued from page 28*

Boulevard. Marconi Park has a small green lawn, a border with lovely mounds of native bunch grass, and flowers in the middle, including sticky monkey flower, with orange blossoms. Regarding grass, Paul suggested that if you have a “show” lawn that you don’t really use, you might want to replace it with *carex pansa*, a slightly more shaggy native grass, which requires less water and maintenance.

Pioneer Park gardeners Mark Tilley and Milo Linaman happened to be on the Hill that day. They’d just planted flowering currant, artemisia, Oregon grape, buckwheat, and other natives in the newly opened view corridors among the Monterey cypress trees (see “Parks, Trees, & Birds Committee Report”). Other plants that do well on the Hill include Douglas iris, St. Catherine’s lace, silk tassel tree, ceanothus, bee plant, purple needlegrass, hummingbird sage, manzanita, toyon (aka California holly), and coffeeberry.

I planted toyon, manzanita, and coffeeberry in our small yard on the east slope of Telegraph Hill about a year ago, but they haven’t done well. On this walk I found out why. Although native plants don’t need as much water as exotics, they do need some, and I hadn’t been watering them properly. According to Mark and Milo, the top of Telegraph Hill is “hydrophobic”—water tends to run off, rather than soak in. I’ve been watering my natives once a month, like it says in the garden book, but the water hasn’t been getting to their roots, because I’ve been using a hose. Drip irrigation is better: It uses small amounts of water, which tend to soak in. Eventually I’ll install an irrigation setup. Apparently it’s not too complicated or expensive. You need to position a drip

near each plant, or use “micro-spray” irrigation: raised spray heads about every five feet that mist the area with a micro-rain. Both drip and micro-spray systems can be purchased at garden supply stores. At Urban Farmer, if you bring in a sketch with measurements, they’ll help you design everything. Native plants only need irrigation during the first year or so, as they get established.

Another problem for my poor natives has been that I put them in a shady spot; they like more sun than they’re getting. They’ll just have to live with that though, because I don’t have a sunnier location. It helps to check on whether plants prefer sun, shade, or a combination (told you I was a beginner!).

Near the end of our circumambulation of Telegraph Hill, Paul and I came upon a ratty slope of bare dirt, rock, and tree stumps near the south stairway, graced by a “No Dumping” sign. Milo intends to plant purple needle grass, buckwheat, and California fuchsia here, but the area needs to be connected to the drip irrigation system for anything to actually take hold and do well, and that will cost money.

*continued on p. 38*



Pioneer Park Planting

PHOTO BY JUDY IRVING

# THD BOARD MOTIONS

FOR THE MONTHS OF AUGUST-OCTOBER 2009

**MOTION:** THD is a pro public transportation organization but does not support the Central Subway project for the following reasons:

- 1) The cost is significantly disproportionate to the stated benefits.
- 2) The project fails to serve the transportation needs of the city at large.
- 3) The project creates potential adverse impacts to Chinatown, North Beach, Washington Square Park and their historic resources.

THD encourages city to redirect its commitment toward improving and expanding existing surface public transportation systems, thereby increasing the benefit and reducing the cost.

**The Motion passed.**

**MOTION:** THD supports preserving the existing library and renovating and expanding it to meet the various needs of the community. THD supports open space on 701 Lombard consistent with the use of open space funds spent to purchase the parcel. THD supports a thorough, objective master planning effort for Joe DiMaggio Park and Playground that includes retaining the existing library and exploring Mason Street options.

**The Motion passed.**

## September, 2009

No Meeting

## October, 2009

**MOTION:** THD does not support the consolidated design of the California Pacific Medical Center building because of the height, bulk and massing proposed.

**The Motion passed.**



## ATTENTION, THD MEMBERS

The Telegraph Hill Dwellers **Semaphore** Needs Your Help.

For several years Kathleen Cannon, our intrepid **Semaphore** ad sales person, has been beating the sidewalks of our picturesque neighborhood in a quest for the advertising that keeps our publication alive. It's due to her efforts that we have been able to expand and improve **The Semaphore**.

But it's a lonely mission and now THD needs your help:

1. Take out a **Semaphore** ad for your business or service.
2. Contact a business that you love and loves you about taking an ad. If you'll do the "leg work," we'll make the "close."
3. Volunteer to assist Kathleen, our ad selling quest.

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Business Card —	2X3: one issue \$45.00, one year \$155
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½ Page —	3.5X6: one issue, \$145, one year, \$525
Full Page —	7X6: one issue, \$265, one year, \$975

For more information or to place an ad, call or email

Art Peterson, Semaphore Editor, 956-7817/apeterson@nwp.org

## Why Native Gardens? continued from page 36

THD and the Pioneer Park Project will collaborate to make this happen.

In addition to making sure your native plants are getting the amount of light they like and the amount of water they need, Paul mentioned several other do's and don'ts. Natives don't need fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and the like. They do need to have weeds removed so they can grow. The worst weed by far, agreed all the gardeners, was "that grass," *erharta erecta*, which keeps popping up all over the Hill. If you have a small yard, you could win this battle; it's much harder to eradicate in a large open space like Pioneer Park. Plant now and the winter rains will help you out. It helps to mulch around the plants to keep weeds down. Those kitchen scraps that we're now required to separate from garbage actually make great mulch when composted.

There are several native plant demonstration gardens close by: Golden Gate Park's Strybing Arboretum (which also has native plant sales), Berkeley's Tilden Park, Woodside's Yerba Buena Garden and Nursery, and U.C. Berkeley's Botanical Garden. You can purchase native plants on-line at baynatives.com, at garden supply stores, or at the HANC recycling center near Kezar Stadium. Groups like the California Native Plant Society and Nature in the City sponsor guided walks of our natural areas (Bernal Hill, Corona Heights, Mt. Davidson) and private gardens. There are flower walks, butterfly walks, bird walks, weeding parties (!) – many ways to explore our city's natural habitat, and learn how to contribute to a more wildlife-friendly environment.

There's just one caveat: Don't go overboard. Make changes slowly. Birds have adapted to non-native berry bushes, for example, and if you rip out a cotoneaster for the sake of planting toyon, the birds who depended on the non-native berries won't have anything to eat for several years. Alan Hopkins, the expert birder who helped me with "The *Other* Birds of Telegraph Hill," article in the last *Semaphore* has this to say:

"Unfortunately, I think there are some people who are native plant fundamentalists who are so convinced by their own dogma they fail to see that plants they don't like can be valuable habitat. Plants like Himalayan blackberry and cotoneaster, in most cases, were 'planted' by birds pooping their seeds. Birds are showing their food preference with their droppings. Having said all that, it will be great to plant natives, just ask what service will this plant provide? If it does not provide fruit, seed, insects, nectar or cover, it is just taking up space." In other words, think like a bird!"

Some of the photos that accompany this article were taken on a rainy day in November in Strybing Arboretum's "California Native Plant Garden." Niki Goldsborough, (nikigold@earthlink.net) a THD member who has been a docent in the Arboretum for over thirty years, showed me around. Niki leads walks on the fourth Thursday of every month at 1:30 PM (meet at bookstore near entrance). She said she would be happy to take a group of THD members on a walk this spring, or any time.

### Many thanks:

Paul Furman, co-owner online nursery, [www.baynatives.com](http://www.baynatives.com)  
Niki Goldsborough, THD native plant expert  
<nikigold@earthlink.net>  
Alan Hopkins, birder extraordinaire, <ash@sfo.com>  
Bill Fee, landscape architect, <bill@carducciassociates.com>  
David Loeb, publisher, *Bay Nature*, [www.baynature.com](http://www.baynature.com)

### Additional online resources:

California Native Plant Society [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org)  
HANC, 780 Frederick St [www.hanc-sf.org/native-plant-nursery/](http://www.hanc-sf.org/native-plant-nursery/)  
Nature in the City [www.natureinthecity.org/](http://www.natureinthecity.org/)  
Larner Seeds [www.larnerseeds.com](http://www.larnerseeds.com)  
Strybing Arboretum [www.sfbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org)  
Jeffrey Caldwell [/jeffreycaldwell.blogspot.com/](http://jeffreycaldwell.blogspot.com/)

### Books:

*The Habitat Garden Book* by Nancy Bauer  
*Gardening With a Wild Heart* by Judith Larner





# TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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# THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

## STANDING COMMITTEES

**PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION.** Gail and Paul Switzer. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

**PLANNING AND ZONING.** Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094, Mary Lipian, 391-5652. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

**SEMAPHORE.** Editor, Art Peterson 956-7817; [artpeterson@writingproject.org](mailto:artpeterson@writingproject.org). The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

**PROGRAM.** Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

**BUDGET.** Gail Switzer, [gail\\_switzer@yahoo.com](mailto:gail_switzer@yahoo.com). As prescribed in Bylaws for Treasurer.

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## SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

**PARKS, TREES, AND BIRDS.** Judy Irving, chair. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

**THD WEB SITE.** Webmaster, Al Fontes; [webmaster@thd.org](mailto:webmaster@thd.org). Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

**ART AND CULTURE.** Julie Jaycox, chair. Organizes events and projects that celebrate the humanities and history of our neighborhood.

## LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

**COALITION FOR SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS.** Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

**NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION.** Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; [gerrycrowley@aol.com](mailto:gerrycrowley@aol.com). Tel-Hi-sponsored group of residents, merchants and government agencies working together to address neighborhood issues.

**N.E.R.T.** Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

## WEB SITE = [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org)

Whether you want to catch up on THD's Oral Histories, see what the THD is up to, or submit old photos of the Hill, [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org) is the place to go. Use the Web site to discover or email information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between *Semaphores*.

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### *Schedules of Committee Meetings*

PLANNING & ZONING: First Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070, 563-3494, 391-5652.

Look to the THD website for information on THD events. **Log on to <http://www.thd.org>**

**For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.**

**THD Welcomes New Members Sept-Nov. 2009:** Terry & Regan Anderlini,  
Kathleen Burch, Dick Ingraham & Bill Gregory, Stacia Kato, Fiona McGregor,  
Jonathan Middlebrook, Michael Mott, Donna & Robert Watke

### **NEW MEMBER INFORMATION**

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ENCLOSED FOR 1-YEAR MEMBERSHIP

Individual \$30\_\_ Household \$45\_\_ Senior (age 65 and over) \$20\_\_ Senior Household \$35\_\_