THD Art Walk 2010

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This is an update on the pressing issue concerning the northeast waterfront that THD has been tracking carefully for more than a year. As reported to the membership by e-mail in August and in my last president’s column, the Planning Department moved full-speed ahead with its Northeast Embarcadero Study despite lack of community support. THD actively participated in the Planning Department’s process (alleged community outreach) for more than 18 months, but our efforts were in vain. Not only did the Planning Department “finalize” the report regardless of the input of THD and other neighborhood organizations and residents, but the Planning Commission voted 4-3 to adopt the recommendations of the study and urge the port to apply them. Some of the recommendations call for increasing height limits along the Embarcadero.

Endorsing new height limits and other guidelines under the guise of a community study without examining their environmental impacts violates the letter and spirit of California’s Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A coalition of neighborhood groups, along with THD, filed suit against the city to reverse its approval of the Northeast Embarcadero Study without completing an environmental review as required by state law. The lawsuit requests that the Superior Court issue a writ of mandate ordering the Planning Commission to rescind its actions related to the study and refrain from any further consideration of the study until a full environmental review is completed.

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“ Anything can be fixed except a fallen soufflé.”

307-1205
Within days of the Planning Commission’s vote, a developer with a pending project in the area submitted plans reflecting the new height limits advocated by the study. Even after the suit was filed, the Port Commission voted 3-0 to approve that developer’s term sheet based on the new plans reflecting the new height limits. The Port Commission has since been added as a defendant in the suit. Several venerable neighborhood groups have joined the plaintiffs, including the San Francisco Tenants Union. The reasoning behind the suit and the plaintiffs’ requests are best summarized by selections from the introductory paragraphs of the lawsuit:

* * *

“The spectacular San Francisco waterfront provides a diverse, scenic and bustling eastern boundary to the city. Waterfront development affects scores of neighborhoods and businesses and engages local residents and visitors. Neighbors to Preserve the Waterfront has joined an unprecedented coalition of public-interest San Francisco neighborhood, tenant and housing organizations to challenge the city’s violations of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in planning the future of the waterfront.

“To guide upcoming waterfront projects, the city prepared the Northeast Embarcadero Study during 2009-2010. The study’s proclaimed intent is to guide the development of properties along the west side of the Embarcadero and to establish guidelines for site design and massing of development. The problem is that the study is already being implemented—without the environmental review required by CEQA.

“As was pointed out to the Planning and Port commissions, the endorsement of the study and approval of the term sheet will have environmental consequences that cannot lawfully occur without prior CEQA review to consider impacts and alternatives. CEQA applies to any discretionary government action that may have a significant environmental impact. Its review processes must be scrupulously followed and must occur early enough in any planning process to avoid post hoc rationalization of decisions already made. The California Supreme Court recently reiterated that an agency action is illegally premature if it moves a project’s momentum significantly forward without first complying with CEQA — even if the action taken is short of a final, formal project approval.

The court’s writ is of critical importance not only to the development of the San Francisco waterfront, but to the ongoing implementation of CEQA throughout the city.”

* * *

THD remains committed to ensuring developments along the waterfront comply with basic planning principles.
NO TREASURES IN THIS ISLAND PLAN

By Nancy Shanahan

The redevelopment of Treasure Island and Yerba Buena Island, the former naval base, has moved one step closer to reality with the publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). THD, the Sierra Club, Livable Cities, Audubon, SF Heritage, ArcEcology and many other individuals and organizations submitted comments on the DEIR, which analyzed the redevelopment proposal that has grown from 3,000 residential units with limited parking, to 8,000 units and 11,000-plus parking spaces.

A main point of concern is the change from the celebrated sustainable development concept to the drastically different plan now in the DEIR. One major difference is the growth in housing units, including a high-rise tower of 65 stories, as well as 19 glass buildings of up to 45 stories.

The most alarming impact of this proposal is the number of car trips it would generate on the Bay Bridge. The proposed 10,120 off-street parking spaces and 1,035 metered on-street parking spaces to serve an estimated 18,000 residents, as well as visitors to the proposed shopping center, office buildings, hotel and sports complex will significantly increase congestion into San Francisco and the East Bay—and will impact regional transportation systems. The DEIR continued on page 7
calls these traffic impacts “significant and unavoidable.” Yet, according to the DEIR, the project’s proposed transit options are limited to a ferry terminal and one leased ferry (providing service at 50-minute intervals and operating only between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m.), the continued operation of Muni’s 108-Treasure Island line at existing service levels, and the initiation of new bus service to downtown Oakland (one line) to be operated by AC Transit.

With no bike or pedestrian path on the western portion of the bridge, the only options for Treasure Island residents traveling to San Francisco will be to drive or take the limited public transit. According to the DEIR, the developers propose to offset the costs of creating more transit options by selling parking spaces and charging visitors to park. This logic seems to be in conflict with the original philosophy of the plan that emphasized dense urban development with limited reliance on car traffic. On average, a housing unit will produce 2.5 car trips daily, causing the carbon footprint of this “green development” to go up significantly and the commute for Bay Bridge drivers to be longer and much more stressful.

Another major impact of this proposed development will be on scenic views and vistas of San Francisco and the bay. The DEIR describes the proposed project as “a prominent cluster of 19 high-rise towers at the center of the San Francisco Bay, which would be particularly prominent from public vantage points along the eastern shoreline of San Francisco, Telegraph Hill, the East Bay shoreline and from the Bay Bridge east span.”

The scope and style of development, with many glass high-rises, will also have an undeniable impact on migrating and resident birds as window strikes are expected to be prevalent. There are also protected plant species on the islands that will be disrupted.

If the Board of Supervisors approves the proposed redevelopment plan for Treasure Island and authorizes the conveyance of Treasure Island to the Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA), a redevelopment agency under state law, the proposed project would be a huge departure from longstanding city policy. Under the proposed scheme, future development would not be subject to the city’s Planning Code or General Plan, or to review by the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors. By approving the EIR and redevelopment plan, the Board of Supervisors would be relinquishing all city authority over the future of Treasure Island to the non-elected TIDA Board of Directors and the Treasure Island Community Development, LLC, a private development team that includes Lennar Corp. and Wilson Meany Sullivan.

Proclaimed to be a redevelopment plan that will “advance the sustainability of the islands” with the “potential to establish an international model for ecological urban development,” there is nothing in the DEIR to support this claim.

If, as claimed in the DEIR, the only economically viable alternative is one that results in such significant and unavoidable impacts to the Bay Area, we would urge our decision-makers to wait until it does become economically viable to develop a sustainable project, one that truly represents an international model for ecological urban development without destroying the world-renowned splendor of San Francisco Bay.

Please call or write our District 3 Supervisor David Chiu (415) 554-7450 <david.chiu@sfgov.org> and ask him to take a closer look at the most recent Treasure Island development plans. If you would like to get more involved on this issue, e-mail <planningandzoning@thd.org> and ask to be put on our TI e-mail list for updates on this project.
As the season for harvesting is upon us, I’d like to share with you some results of my office’s work during the past few months.

Peaceful Coexistence with Tour Buses

While we all appreciate the importance of tourism, I have heard repeated complaints from Telegraph Hill and North Beach residents about sightseeing tour buses negatively impacting our quality of life. Many tour buses idle too long, block traffic and use extremely loud amplification systems as they drive through quiet, residential streets. San Francisco does little to regulate tour buses.

After working with several city agencies, however, I am introducing legislation that will restrict the use of amplified loudspeakers on open-air sightseeing buses, akin to measures enacted in New York City. At our urging, the MTA is developing its first tour bus management plan for better tour bus movement and parking. Finally, I have asked the SFPD to enforce existing noise and idling laws. My hope is that these policy changes will allow for peaceful coexistence between residents and tour buses.

Building Strong and Resilient Neighborhoods

My office has been working with the Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN), San Francisco State and University of San Francisco students and North Beach and Telegraph Hill community leaders and organizations on an exciting project called the North Beach Resiliency Initiative. The initiative, led by THD’s Gerry Crowley, is based on an emerging body of knowledge that shows that rather than simply reacting to the aftermath of a disaster, communities that are proactive in preparing for serious challenges can not only recover more quickly, but also build valuable social capital that allows them to solve today’s neighborhood challenges.

The Initiative is still in its formative stages, but it has already been engaging with many nonprofit, business, religious and community organizations in the northeast part of District 3. Its goal will be to strengthen relationships between the people and organizations in North Beach and Telegraph Hill. For more information on NEN and the North Beach Resiliency Initiative, visit www.empowersf.org.

Promoting Safer Nightlife

After passing legislation to deal with several aspects of nightclub safety, I learned that the city has never addressed fly-by-night party promoters, who disappear after creating public-safety problems and nuisances. Moreover, my staff learned that in the past year when the Entertainment Commission had to suspend or require additional safety requirements for clubs’ entertainment permits; more than 80 percent of such instances occurred after a serious public-safety incident at a promoted event.

To address the situation, I have introduced an ordinance to create city oversight of party promoters. My legislation would require promoters to register online so the city knows who is promoting parties. Any party promoter who creates public-safety issues or public nuisances could be required by the Entertainment Commission to obtain additional insurance, increase safety measures or be further regulated. This legislation will help us move one step closer toward a vibrant, healthy and safe nightlife in our neighborhoods.

continued on next page
Appropriate Cell Phone Tower Installations

Last month at the Planning Commission, my office built on the good work of some of our neighbors to postpone the installation of three so-called micro cell phone towers in North Beach. The planning commissioners, who agreed to our request for a continuance, seemed to share many of the concerns raised. The issue of wireless facilities that escape the permit requirements of larger cell towers is a thorny one that has been vexing the city for at least a decade. In the coming months, I look forward to working with our neighbors to come up with a long-term solution to this challenge.

Please reach out to my staff and me if there is anything we can do to improve our neighborhoods.

By Cynthia Cristilli

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco has the lowest per capita population of children among major cities in the United States. I’m sure this statistic comes as a surprise to many of our city parents. Housing prices may be the culprit in pushing families out of San Francisco, but how does that explain the proliferation of children in New York City? Are we less “dedicated renters” than those in other big cities? Is it the state of our public schools? Have we simply talked ourselves into not having babies so we can continue to enjoy all the fine dining? Or could it be that San Francisco is just not kid friendly? I’ve given these questions much thought as I continue to bring up my daughter in the heart of our city.

As a metro card carrying, urban-type person, I relocated from Manhattan to San Francisco in the early 1990s for the express purpose of having a child in a more “gentle” urban environment and I have never looked back. My husband and I had our daughter in 1999 and at that point, a whole new spectrum of San Francisco opened up for us. Over the last several years, I have explored every park, every library and every child-friendly event the city has to offer and I am still amazed at the sheer breadth of activities at our fingertips. I’ll admit that we struggle with the idea of never owning our own home, but are we ready to trade the stimulation, diversity and accessibility of living in the city for the security of homeownership? So far, the answer is: no way! We have raised our daughter in the North Beach/Telegraph Hill neighborhood and feel she has had a most singular and enriched childhood. Growing up in this wonderful neighborhood, my daughter has been exposed to all the riches and culture of a big city, while at the same time she’s had the feel of living in a small town.

From our first forays into Washington Square when my daughter was an infant, we’ve utilized our neighborhood parks and made the most of all the green space within a 10-block radius of our home. There, among the sunbathers, dogs, homeless and assorted characters we met like-minded neighborhood parents and created relationships that have carried us from infancy to tween-hood and hopefully beyond. The North Beach, Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill parks are the places where our community of neighborhood families was forged and continues to flourish 10 years later.

A park ritual began then, and the routine continues today, even though our children are almost raised. The issue of wireless facilities that escape the permit requirements of larger cell towers is a thorny one that has been vexing the city for at least a decade. In the coming months, I look forward to working with our neighbors to come up with a long-term solution to this challenge.

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beyond park age. In the winter (and cold summer months), it’s Joe DiMaggio Playground which gets the most sun. The funky old wooden play structure has provided hours of make believe ship sailing, sliding and twirling on the bars. The space underneath the structure furnishes shade for tunnel digging, fort making and all manner of make believe. I’m happy to report all these years later, not one child has ever caught a disease from the sand, nor stepped on a used needle, or needed a tetanus shot ... all worries that a few moms shared with me before leaving the neighborhood for the safety of the suburbs.

Warmer months are spent at Michelangelo Playground, the antithesis of “retro” Joe DiMaggio, and just a few blocks west on Russian Hill. Michelangelo’s beautifully tended lawn and gardens, plus modern plastic play structure, is still an oasis for many of us, despite the fact there is no bathroom. On the up side, many children (and adults) have learned the art of “holding it” while playing there and can be found running quickly down the Greenwich Street hill toward the first available public restroom.

On the rare very hot days, a few of us opt for Washington Square’s playground, which is shaded year-round. Undaunted by the unsavory characters that roam the outskirts of that park, my daughter began with the baby swings there, and through the years has learned to traverse the monkey bars, as well as swing from ring to ring. Some feel that it is the least “user friendly” playground in the neighborhood. Truthfully, we always wash especially thoroughly afterward and though there IS a public restroom at this site, one enters at their own risk.

This is a reminder that while growing up in our neighborhood has many advantages, it is also a place where children are confronted very early with some of the world’s harsh realities. My daughter is accustomed to seeing people sleeping on sidewalks and in doorways, and is not surprised or disturbed by it. This may not be something to be proud of, yet it’s a reality of growing up in a big city. One positive aspect of this is that it has given us many opportunities to reflect on how fortunate we are. Witnessing firsthand the toll of poverty, mental illness and the results of a lifetime of drinking and drug abuse has opened doors to long discussions about caution and safety, but also about charity, ethics and compassion. No book, television show or planned lesson can ever take the place of an organic conversation about what you witness with your own eyes in your own backyard.

Through all these years we have had the rare privilege of being able to walk our daughter to school each morning. Nothing feels more European than walking down Columbus Avenue at 8:30 a.m., child in hand, passing café patrons having their first cup of espresso. School for us began at Telegraph Hill Co-op, where each set of parents was required to “teach” once a week under the guidance of director Lucy Stoffel. The co-op is where our core group of seven or eight families consolidated into a real collective. From preschool at Tel Hi, kindergarten and grammar school at Yick Wo Elementary and now middle school at Francisco, we’ve had each others’ and our kids’ backs. In that time we have created fundraisers, planned events, protested cut backs, celebrated birthdays and helped each other through numerous crises. I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve needed to call a baby sitter for my daughter; I’ve always looked to my “neighborhood family” for that. We’re a close-knit group where everyone keeps an eye on our “kids.” No child is ever left to walk home alone or suffer through a catastrophe without one of us parents swooping in and closing ranks.

In the meantime, what neighborhood in the city can boast its own small town parade? How many kids can say they have a guaranteed front-row view year after year? Knowing where to position ourselves at the Columbus Day Parade for the thrown salami sandwiches has become an art. We wait in eager anticipation for the Sunset Scavenger trash-
can dancers, the Italian American princesses and the disco dancing girls on the Peroni beer float. Just a few weeks later is the most sacred of children’s holidays, Halloween! A well kept secret by kids in the neighborhood is that the restaurants and bars in North Beach distribute the best and most generous amounts of candy to young, adorably costumed trick-or-treaters. Tipsy patrons, unfamiliar with seeing so many children in this sort of setting, are often so charmed they add cash to the booty bag.

In that vein, growing up in North Beach also translates to kids becoming fairly worldly at an early age. Some may say that bringing 10-year-olds to a restaurant bar isn’t appropriate, but I know my daughter will never forget spending election night 2008 at the lounge of Joe DiMaggio restaurant. Many of us met up there to support one another as we watched the presidential election results. I’m grateful she had the opportunity to watch people cheer and cry and raise their glasses to our first African American president in such a raucous environment. This was a magical evening for many of us, as well as a unique introduction for our children to the roller-coaster of politics, here in the epicenter of liberal San Francisco.

As for our everyday lives, we try and appreciate the rhythm and routine of life in North Beach. Indian summer evenings mean a stroll to Coit Tower where the challenge is to find a small, previously overlooked detail on the Depression-era murals. On Sunday morning, the sad and beautiful music from the Green Street Mortuary Band has helped us gain an appreciation for life and the dignity of death. As a Beat poetry fan, I’m thrilled that my daughter’s fifth-grade poetry reading was held at City Lights Bookstore. Now we even have our own farmers’ market! From tracking the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill, to walking to Stella Pastry after dinner for a cannoli, we consider living in this neighborhood a gift ...and a tremendous way to grow up.

Does North Beach/Telegraph Hill need more green space, a new library and some “refreshing” of our neighborhood parks? The answer to all that is yes. Would I trade any of this for our cherished memories of the existing parks and occasionally smelly old library? Never. The lure of owning our home may be ever present, but how could we give up our own urban/Italian version of Mayberry RFD? Let The Chronicle conjecture on whether San Francisco is kid friendly. To us, there is no question about the high quality of life here for children. When I asked my daughter her opinion on the matter, she summed it up beautifully when she said “living in our neighborhood feels like you’re on vacation most of the time, except when you have to go to school.” I can think of no better endorsement than that.

Neighborhood parents weigh in on the pros and cons of raising kids in North Beach:

I grew up in Brooklyn and this neighborhood reminds me of that. We’re working on retaining the

continued on next page
After a 13-month closure for earthquake-related retrofit, the landmark church at Vallejo and Columbus reopened Aug. 2, on Festa del Perdona, an 800-year-old holiday when the faithful visit a papal-designated sacred place for pardon. Congregants were glad to see abundant clergy and to hear again a century-old organ played in a space famous for almost perfect acoustics.

The 19th-century interior was cleaned, but otherwise untouched, escaping an inevitable beautification as money becomes available for that and a new roof. Exterior painting is under way. St. Francis is back in business with Mass on weekdays at 12:15 p.m., and Sundays at 10 a.m. Presiding as rector is Fr. Gregory Coiro, O.F.M. Cap., an enthusiastic Franciscan who’s caretaker of a church that’s occupied the same site since its dedication during the Gold Rush, in 1849, as California’s first parish church.

Fr. Coiro will supervise the third iteration of a twice-doomed church, closed by the archdiocese in 1994 and left abandoned. Behind the scenes, advocates worked with the archdiocese, more importantly with the Vatican, until another archbishop (now Cardinal, William Levada) came to San Francisco in 1998 to reopen the church. He gave it the best possible start by securing its designation as the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi, and by financing the presence of industrious friars and a brilliant choir. The church flourished for seven years until conflicts between the friars and the choir resulted in both groups leaving in 2005. An administrator was sent in and this time it looked like curtains for the church.

But, exemplifying Emerson’s adage that nothing great is achieved without enthusiasm, Angela Alioto returned from Italy with an extravagant plan. In Assisi is a small structure built by St. Francis.
NORTH EAST XCHANGE TEAM: WHAT NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR MEANS TO US

By Patricia Bourne

We hope by now you’ve heard something about NEXT (the North East Xchange Team), a community organization designed to connect neighbors of all ages in San Francisco’s northeast quadrant. We have a particular interest in making it possible for those who want to stay in their own home as they get older to do so.

NEXT provides a clearing house for knowledge about important services we may need now or someday, incorporating neighbors’ recommendations and reviews. It develops awareness and use of neighborhood opportunities for everything from shopping, eating, exercising, learning and having a good time. It organizes programs, activities, workshops, support groups, classes and interest groups. It encourages us to work together on common issues of safety, preparedness, re-use and recycling. In all that we do, we seek to collaborate with existing organizations and services and are anxious to hear your ideas about how we can work together.

How does NEXT SF make this happen? Membership dues and philanthropic support pay for a spare staff for NEXT, but our initials don’t spell “North East Xchange Team” to be clever. The heart and soul and backbone of the NEXT idea is that we invent and sustain ourselves by mobilizing our community as a true exchange team of neighbors. Our goal is no less than to invent a 21st century form of community that relies not on false nostalgia for 19th century rural life or on the do-goodism of the 20th.

Introducing: NEXT’s Neighbor to Neighbor Program

We invite you to join NEXT and to become a Neighborly Neighbor. Being an NN might mean joining forces with others to develop and maintain a Neighborhood Exchange that deals in “stuff” and in skills. Neighbors put out offers to loan (in exchange for borrowing) a tall ladder, for instance, or a cordless drill, or a king-size coffee pot. They might put out offers to exchange skills, such as nursing house plants back to life, for instance, or sewing on buttons, babysitting, crawling under a sink to do a minor plumbing repair, or getting acquainted with a new piece of software.

Neighborly Neighbors also bone up on topics that puzzle many of us. They are available to spread their knowledge one-on-one, by giving workshops or by writing an advice column — a blog even — for our newsletter. Imagine, for instance, a neighbor with knowledge about long-term care insurance who doesn’t sell it! Or how about a couple of neighbors who’ve become clever about how to digitize and organize family photos, or one who’s learned what you really can put in your compost. We have a long and lively idea list that we’d be glad to send you. For this list and your questions and ideas about our Neighbor to Neighbor program, please e-mail patriciabourne@nextsf.org or call 474-0212.

For more information about NEXT SF, contact Jonee Levy at jonee.levy@gmail.com or 699-5987 or visit our website at www.nextsf.org.

BOOKS ON THE HILL

Join an ongoing book club that meets the first Tuesday of the month. Enjoy a potluck dinner and stimulating discussions about our monthly book choice. We read fiction, non-fiction, biographies, and many more. A theme of the year determines our reading material.

Contact Carol Peterson
415-956-7817
NORTH BEACH CITIZENS OPEN COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

By Brady McCartney

On Oct. 6, North Beach Citizens (NBC) launched the North Beach Citizens Community Food Pantry. The food pantry is a partnership between NBC and the San Francisco Food Bank, which were both interested in opening a food pantry in North Beach to address the needs of low-income, senior and disabled residents living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. Thus far, NBC has signed up more than 110 participants.

The food pantry has been in the works for several years, but came to fruition this fall for two reasons. First, NBC has been searching for a larger space to accommodate its organizational evolution and recently agreed to rent the adjoining storefront to its 900-square-foot space at 720 Columbus Ave. It is a short-term solution, while NBC continues to look for a long-term home, but this development provided the space required to open the food pantry.

Second, and most important, an increasing number of North Beachers survive on modest incomes.

St. Francis continued from page 12

where he and his friars lived and worshipped, which he called the Porziuncola (“my little share”). Alioto wanted to build a replica of the chapel in the unused gymnasium beside the church. It opened in August 2008 as an ecumenical destination attracting passersby and, soon, visitors by the bus load. The integrity, significance and popularity of the Porziuncola convinced the archdiocese to retrofit the church, an action that indemnifies its future.

Angela Alioto is an attorney and former supervisor whose father, Joe Alioto, was a city mayor under whose watch the Transamerica Pyramid was built. Joe was North Beach born and bred, a long-time parishioner of the church and a devotee of St. Francis, as is his daughter.

Which bring us to the piazza proposed for the block facing the church and Caffe Trieste; construction awaits funding. What the space will be named and what it will look like depends on the outcome of a friendly rivalry between Alioto, who wants a Piazza del Francesco, and poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who conceived the idea decades ago for a Poet’s Corner. St. Francis was a poet; Ferlinghetti is a Franciscan at heart, and Joe Alioto was a poet in his last years. Whether sacred or secular, a pleasant piazza will manifest sooner or later where poets, saints and the rest of us can meet for coffee.

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By Miriam Owen

He always greets us with the most delightful childlike enthusiasm. We are out early, walking the dog. He stands in the same place everyday, in front of a little used driveway between two stores on Jefferson Street. We are on our way to Aquatic Park, eager to give Pumpkin a romp on the beach and to catch the morning vista of the Golden Gate Bridge. His gnarled fingers curl around a large empty paper cup. Behind the cup, he holds a cardboard sign with an uneven script that reads: “I have MS.”

Friendly, always flashing a broad smile and greeting us with a warm “good morning,” how could we walk by without stopping so that he could pet our dog, a soft fluffy apricot labradoodle, whose happy personality and infectious spirit somehow echoed his own? As he petted her, we’d exchange snippets of information.

We introduced ourselves, told him a bit about our lives and he shared a few details of his. He lives in a nursing home in the Richmond District. Friends bring him down to Fisherman’s Wharf early in the morning before going to their jobs so that he doesn’t have to hang around the depressing facts of life at the nursing home all day. Tapping a finger to his head, to emphasize the point, he explains that he is still all there mentally, unlike the people he lives around at the home.

He comes out, he explained, for half of his day to meet and greet and radiate his sweet self. Then he takes three buses to get home. We all set up challenges to keep us going. For our street friend, it was navigating the return to home turf on public transportation.

At first, I’d walk on by, ignoring his empty cup. Then occasionally, I would shove a five-dollar bill into the back pocket of my jeans, so it would be easy to put in his cup before we passed. I figured $5 once in a while made up for all the times I forgot or didn’t bother to rummage through my backpack to find my wallet.

He is always so gracious, so thankful. I knew this $5 wasn’t going toward a bottle of vodka. I understood that medications for MS are costly.

It took me four years to finally ask his name. I think he knew our names by then and he had met our daughter, Berit, during her weeklong annual visit. He always asked how she was doing.

Last time we chatted, he told us it was his birthday. He asked me to guess his age and I hit it dead on when I answered 68. I asked him where he was from. He explained his southerly migration beginning in Elbow, Saskatchewan, then to Seattle, and finally, 18 years ago, arriving in San Francisco. He explained how he thought that his MS was due in part to excessive mercury, eating too much seafood, an easy thing to do, living on the coast for most of a lifetime.

When we first encountered Lionel, he would be standing or leaning on the side of a building. Then he was there with a walker, and finally, a plastic chair that a merchant provided for him. The progression of his disease was visible only in the growing need for physical support. His affability and sweet positive countenance are a constant.

I marvel at how I am uplifted after I have chatted with Lionel. He humbles me and forces me to get out of my soup on days when I might be down. How can I walk by this man and not be affected with his goodness and his strength? My trials are so minor compared to his.
By Kathleen Cannon

Absinthe Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

At a book introduction at the Comstock Saloon on Saturday, Sept. 24, “A Taste for Absinthe” was not only explored, but created in beakers by Ted Breaux, Lance Winters and Peter Schaf. Absinthe, the dangerous green bitter aperitif that captured the fancy of the French literary circle, scandalized Paris and was banned in France, is now being produced in Oregon where organic wormwood, fennel and anis grow in abundance. The book (available at Book Passage) lists 126 French recipes for Absinthe before it was banned. Which just proves the Comstock Saloon hosts authentic tastings.

Following the Art Walk

The weekend of Sept. 25-26, the THD Art and Culture Committee staged an ambitious open-studio event. More than 40 local studios held open houses. Artists hung works for sale and greeted art aficionados and perspective buyers. Ground zero was the Live Worms Gallery, where Julie Jaycox, Art Peterson and THD volunteers handed out complimentary parking and cappuccino chits. From there the Art Walk hubbed north along Grant Avenue to John Perinni’s Focus Gallery, or south to Canessa Gallery (with a stop at William Stout Architectural Books to view one of Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s best canvases), or up to Russian Hill. Nearby, at Caffe Trieste, Tony Long conducted short-story readings to music, lotsa “Café Musica” by 2 Gypsy Kisses. More bands lined up for the Sunday gig in Jack Kerouac Alley, such as the up-and-coming “Boom, Boom, Boom” from L.A. The Art Walk was an ambitious undertaking and worthy of art in North Beach, Brava, Julie and Art and the Culture Committee!

Boxer Puts Up a Good Fight

The private fundraisers for U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer premiered on Telegraph Hill at the home of Dick Grosboll. In a flat overflowing with eager contributors, Boxer stood atop a box and explained emphatically and eloquently why Democrats must win the 2010 midterm elections. By Semaphore press time, midterm elections will have been decided. With introductions by Aaron Peskin and D3DC President Emily Salgado, attendance and enthusiasm were impressive.

Capt. Anna Brown

During “National Night Out” on July 3, police officers and firefighters, including Capt. Anna continued on next page
Brown, who has since departed in an SFPD shuffle, assembled with an array of police and fire vehicles at Joe DiMaggio Playground. They played basketball and kickball with children, grilled excellent hot dogs (charred perfectly by the Master Chef, Officer Worrel) and chatted with neighbors over sodas as some kids played on the police cars and fire engines.

While pursuing college curricula in business, Anna Brown took a criminology class that changed her life. A classmate challenged her that she [a woman] could not be a SFPD captain. Now, after 33 years with the SFPD, she has achieved this ambition. But, Anna explained, more important than making the rank of captain was [and is] to be a role model for her two daughters.

Brown also said the department’s greatest goal — to reduce serious crimes — is being met. “Quality of life” issues are a big social problem and one of the strongest challenges. Foremost, Brown wants to let neighbors know that “Central Station, including the captain, is available. We want to hear and we want to hear first. We take all complaints seriously.” If you just want to look for related community meetings and crime incidents, reference www.sfgov.org/police.

John Mattos, Stamp Collector

Local illustrator John Mattos will add another U.S. postage stamp to his collection.

John’s stamp commemorating the 100th year of Indianapolis Raceway will be released as a stamp in 2011. Look for it! (One of John’s designs became the stamp depicting the 2006 Olympics in Turin.) Google “john mattos illustration” for more design.

Bummer Summer?

Fiscal problems are continuing to dictate austerity for various summer events. The Ferraris in the Park event on Columbus Day was cancelled because the price of the Washington Square space went up six fold, for example, from $1k to $6k.

Another Columbus Day parade viewer lamented that the “dance of the Sunset Scavengers” is no more. Bring back the dancing garbage guys!

However, there was All San Francisco Night at the Symphony, where THD and other neighborhood groups offer members tickets for $10, A visiting friend could not believe it. Having missed the boat with THD, a couple of tickets were available at the box office so we heard Beethoven’s Fifth.

Also THD hosted a social and dinner meeting in two historic spots, the Comstock Saloon and the Southside Rowing Club.
In the age of YELP, how does a food critic write about a restaurant that, although only a scant year old, has 553 mostly rave reviews on that participatory website? Tony’s busy Pizza Napoletana has become a vibrant part of our neighborhood and deserves attention from The Semaphore. Instead of echoing what is good at Tony’s, however, I decided to focus on why it is so good. I wanted to tell the story that Tony’s technology and ingredients play in the establishment’s remarkable success. My guide in this quest was Nancy Puglisi, Tony Gemignani’s partner, who took me on a tour of the inner workings of the business.

When the pair decided to open in San Francisco, they found the space on Union Street empty. “I looked in the windows and saw the bar, floors and ceilings and it was love at first sight,” Nancy said.

With the help of their other partner, Bruno DiFabio, who owns five restaurants in New York, the project moved through the often torturous San Francisco permit process. Renovations were necessary. For instance, the stage erected by a previous owner in hope of acquiring an entertainment license had to be demolished. They began work in February 2009, but didn’t open until July of that year because, according to Nancy, “It’s important to do things right the first time. If you don’t, it’s hard to catch up.”

Then Tony’s was ready to show the world its first oven, the Cirglaino from Naples, capable of reaching temperatures of 900 degrees. It was in Naples that Tony achieved fame for his award-winning Pizza Margherita, the traditional dish of the region.

The next oven was one of two Marshall Ovens. The first was the Classic Italian Dome, where they cook classic Italian pizzas. Then they installed their Stack Oven, to bake the traditional New York-style pizza. Their plan was to have a “one stop shop for pizza.” Are there really that many different kinds of pizzas, with different flours, sauces and ingredients? “Yes,” answered Nancy, “as well as different laws per state as to the type of ovens you can have.” Next came the Cuppone, a Sicilian electric oven, for Pizza Romana, a long thin pizza.

Although these four ovens were adequate, the owners felt they hadn’t reached their goal of offering all STG pizzas ((those initials stand for “selected, traditional, guaranteed,”) offered around the world. STG is a Naples version of the French wine appellation system. To achieve this STG designation your pizza must be 100 percent authentic in its use of ingredients from the region. Tony’s is committed to achieving STG.

When the deli store space next door recently became available, the partners grabbed it and began remodeling. They had a vision of a classic New York takeout deli, where one can get all styles of pizza and calzone as well as sandwiches as good as those offered at Katz’s in New York. For the deli, they make their own corned beef and pastrami, and they’ve installed a coal-fired oven where Eric Corbin, who worked at the famous Grimaldi’s in New York, is in charge.

Sitting in the corner is the last oven they installed. This huge Rotoflex oven has three shelves that turn and cook up to 25 pizzas at a time. Entering the deli you feel as if you are in a famous venue in New York

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WHY THE EXISTING NORTH BEACH LIBRARY SHOULD BE SAVED

By Chris Stockton

To construct and destroy versus to conserve and renovate is the basic debate surrounding the North Beach Branch Library on Mason Street at Columbus Avenue. Many people favor constructing a new library across the street while many others favor renovating the existing library, which will prevent the destruction of part of the fine architectural heritage of San Francisco and conserve it for the pleasure and use of future generations. Is it better to construct a new building on part of the Mason Street right-of-way and an adjacent small triangular site, which was acquired by the city by eminent domain for open space, and destroy a landmark building? Or, is it better to conserve a landmark building and renovate it with improvements that are certainly feasible as has been demonstrated by recent renovations to other libraries in the city?

The architects for the North Beach Branch Library, Appleton & Wolfard, were also the architects for the Marina, Western Addition and Parkside branch libraries and others. These three libraries have been recently renovated and to visit them is very informative.

The Marina Branch Library at 1890 Chestnut St., near Webster Street, has just about what any branch library might want. It’s clean with attractive lighting suspended from a lofty, gently sloping ceiling, (one of Appleton & Wolfard’s signature design features). It’s quiet with an attractively carpeted floor and a great variety of seating and study areas. Exposed structural steel reinforcement and hardware for additional earthquake safety have been incorporated into the building without diminishing its original character and aesthetic. Expansive windows take in the varied scene at the surrounding George Moscone Recreation Center.

The Western Addition Branch Library at 1500 Scott St., near Geary Boulevard, has also been sensitively renovated. It’s clean and well-lighted with vast expanses of north-facing windows and a very pleasant patio sheltered by the west and south wings of the building. There appear to be more than enough up-to-date computer stations and a variety of seating areas. The old resilient floor tile seems a little funky, but books are easily accessed on open shelves and toilets have been completely rebuilt.

The Parkside Branch Library at 1250 Taraval St., near 22nd Avenue, has not reopened yet, but it definitely looks promising. The exterior brick walls have been thoroughly restored and enhanced, disabled access ramps have been worked into the hillside landscape, and the north side of the building is dominated with north-facing windows looking up into McCoppin Square to a fine old grove of trees. Here again, the west and south wings of the building embrace a nicely secluded reading patio.

What these three projects demonstrate is that the existing branch libraries can be very successfully restored, remodeled and expanded to suit current needs. It is not necessary to destroy these buildings and construct something new; they can be conserved and renovated.

Accompanying this article is a schematic plan for the renovation and expansion of the North Beach Branch Library. This plan was prepared by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects and is an exhibit in the Draft Environmental Impact Report, Oct. 25, 2010, for the library project. The plan illustrates how the main reading room of the library can be renovated with very minor alterations and how an addition can be built southeast toward Greenwich Street along
THE DEEP CUT

By Catherine Accardi

In the early days of San Francisco, the north-east section of the city, now known as North Beach, looked like the illustration below. This hamlet was called Yerba Buena. In this illustration, dated 1847, the shoreline in the center is labeled Montgomery Street. Telegraph Hill would be to the far right, just out of view.

Clarke’s Point was named after pioneer William Squire Clark. He is credited with building the first wharf in San Francisco, called the Broadway wharf, extending 150 feet into the bay.

The Broadway wharf was completed in September 1847, just a few months before the beginning of California’s Gold Rush. This wharf allowed ships to directly unload cargo onto the shore. Prior to 1847, goods were brought ashore by lighterage.

Telegraph Hill originally extended east beyond Sansome Street toward the bay. It also extended south beyond Broadway. What we see nowadays is the result of quarrying, cuts and grading between 1850 and 1864. After quarrying parts of the hill, the earth and rocks were used for various purposes, including sea walls requiring tons of rocks and rubble.

The vintage photo at top of next page was taken, looking west, at the corner of Broadway and Montgomery Street at the base of Telegraph Hill. The year was 1864. We can see a portion of Russian Hill in the distance. The front of the photograph reads: “The deep cut looking west towards Russian Hill from Montgomery Street.”

Written on the front of the vintage photo on the bottom right is “Cost $30,000.” Rugged scenes like these continued for years, mostly on the eastern side of Telegraph Hill. Imagine standing on Montgomery Street, 146 years ago, looking at the Deep Cut. The topography we see today is the result of what we see here back in 1864. Nowadays, we still agonize over disruptive changes to our urban fabric, whether due to new roadways or high-rise buildings. History does

Imagine standing at this shoreline 163 years ago, watching magnificent sailing vessels dotting the bay. Several wharfs jutted into the bay. One of these was at Clarke’s Point, near what is now Broadway and Battery Street. The point marked a portion of the original shoreline along the base of Telegraph Hill where Yerba Buena Cove swept inland west to Montgomery Street, as well as south and east to Rincon Point at the end of Folsom and Spear streets.
repeat itself. Photographs such as these are a reminder of where we have been and where we are likely to go.

These marvelous images are among the more than 200 that appear in the book, *Images of America—San Francisco's North Beach and Telegraph Hill* by Catherine Accardi, due to be released in November.

THE ILLUSTRATION OF YERBA BUENA IS COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

THE TWO VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE ACQUIRED FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY.
WHY THE NEW NORTH BEACH LIBRARY SHOULD BE BUILT

By Paulett Taggart

A new library on the triangle is the best solution for the library and for recreation space.

1. Existing Library

The existing Appleton-Wolford library is an adequate building, but much less successful than the other seven A-W libraries in San Francisco. The Marina branch, for example, both before and after renovation, opens to the park on all sides, and the building has a great indoor/outdoor relationship. The North Beach branch, on a much tighter sloped site, has very little indoor/outdoor relationship. Even more important, the designers neglected to create a building that responds to the site. On the Mason Street side, where you want an urban presence, we have one-story, plus façade, while the back (east) facade is two- to two-and-a-half stories of mostly blank wall facing the playground and sending a large shadow over the tennis and bocce courts in the afternoon.

2. Urban Design/Master Plan

We took a long look at this block when my firm designed the renovation of the North Beach Pool and Clubhouse. At the time, we wished the pool or library could be relocated; their locations create a bottleneck that splits the playground into two parts. The triangle was acquired in order to maintain the quantity and improve the quality of recreation space in North Beach while providing the additional space the library needed. However, the triangle (on busy Columbus Avenue) is not a good location for recreation.

Intensive master-plan studies have shown that the best option is to move the library to the triangle where it will present a strong urban edge along Columbus Avenue and at the same time create a more coherent recreational open space. The plan allows for the relocation of the tennis courts to the south so that all of the outdoor recreation areas can be connected. While this plan does not require closing Mason Street, doing so will make this area a great center for our community. In addition, placing the library on the triangle gives the play areas maximum sunlight.

3. Proposed expansion of existing library

Expanding the library will not solve any problems and will create new ones. Both the north and south expansions present the following concerns:

- First and foremost, both expansion proposals almost double the footprint of the library, eating up valuable recreation space which cannot be replaced on the triangle.
- The additions do not offer the possibility of a good floor plan, as an expanded library footprint will be operationally inefficient, and

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create awkward transitions between levels.

Based on my own firm's experience renovating the Golden Gate Valley Branch Library, the cost of a renovation with a substantial addition will be equal to or greater than the cost of a new library. We will be paying the same or more for a much less successful North Beach Branch Library.

The southern expansion has the following additional issues:
• More building volume to the south means more shadows on the playground from late morning through late afternoon.
• The children's play area will be substantially reduced in size with no good place for relocation. The children's play area is a very heavily used neighborhood resource; this would be a great loss.

The northern expansion has the following additional issues:
• It completely separates the open space at the triangle.
• It creates a heavily shadowed and not very useful “left-over” open space between the pool and the library.

If anyone does think the existing building is worth preserving, the northern addition will completely overpower the existing building with a façade along Mason equal in length to the existing one; that is why this alternative was rejected by the EIR.

The new library on the triangle is by far the best solution for our neighborhood; it will best serve all neighbors, both library patrons and those who use the recreation spaces.

Columbus Avenue. For those who have difficulty with steps, this plan includes an elevator between the lower level main reading room and upper level teen reading room and new expansion. It is a good plan and should be further developed and refined, perhaps in such a way that the new addition will extend to the corner at Columbus and Greenwich, thereby giving the library greater prominence along Columbus Avenue. By conserving and renovating the library, a landmark building and cultural resource is saved, and a new public park can be developed on the right-of-way of Mason Street and on the adjacent triangular parking lot as was intended when it was acquired by the city.
Judith Robinson, who in 1980 bought the cottage on Telegraph Hill that Moose and Sam Dietsch owned, did an oral history of the three Washington Square Bar & Grill owners in 2002 for a feature article for a St. Louis publication, part of which was recently reprinted in an obituary to Ed Moose. Here is an excerpt from the article.

Contentsedly at leisure and not prone to exercise, Sam Dietsch (who died in 2002) frequented a small bar two blocks from the house in the city's North Beach Italian neighborhood. It had gotten its name from the pistol that the previous owner wore during Prohibition speakeasy days. The then-owner’s wife Rose, whom the husband claimed to have won in a card game, and a few of her ladyfriends occasionally cooked on Sundays, setting out a pot of spaghetti, roast chicken or plates of crab meat balls, “wonderful food,” Sam remembered, that customers could enjoy for $2 from folding chairs and tables covered with a cloth. It was a dark “dive” with a pool table, pin-ball machines that Rose played incessantly, a small triangular opening in the door and blackened windows so no one could see inside. “That was the old style of North-Beach bars,” Sam pointed out, “so people going by couldn’t see who was sitting at the bar, swigging ‘em, at eight o’clock in the morning.”

“Once when we were eating, a pool ball landed right in a bowl of spaghetti! It was like a girl’s gym. Why are we in here?” Ed wondered aloud to Sam. “Customers would ride their motorcycles up to the bar!” Mary Etta remembered.

The whiskey-voiced Rose kept saying that she and her husband, who was ill, were tired of running the place. One day in 1973 Sam uttered the fateful words, “Why not sell it?” He quickly called Ed and suggested that they offer $25,000 for the place (one attraction was its existing liquor license could be passed on to new owners at a time when there was a moratorium on new licenses). Ed iterated all the negatives to such a foolhardy idea, but “the next morning, said smiling, “we make a lot of pizzas here.” Their large refrigerator holds dough that has an 18-hour rising, which is called “refrigerator proofing.” The dough is taken out three hours before it’s used. This slow rise ensures the perfect crust and aids diner’s digestion of the yeast.

Tony, Nancy and Bruno had a vision for their corner in North Beach. When I asked Nancy why she picked North Beach over all the other neighborhoods in the city, she said, “There was nowhere else we wanted to be. It is the best neighborhood in San Francisco.” We are so lucky she peeked into that window on Stockton and Union streets and chose us. We got the best pizzeria and deli in the city.
Manger was three stories with the kitchen on the top floor. Orders were called up the dumb waiter shaft to me in Italian, which I relayed to the cook. Across the street on Washington was the India House and on Merchant and Montgomery was the Blue Fox. Just up from there on Montgomery was the well-known Black Cat.

During its history, Central has served as the venue of many high-profile arrests. Abe Ruef, the less than honest boss of pre-earthquake San Francisco politics, was arrested, booked and tried at Central, which had jail cells and courtrooms. Later, silent-movie star Fatty Arbuckle was booked at Central for the alleged rape and murder of Virginia Rappe at a party given for Fatty at the St. Francis Hotel.

The officer who arrested Arbuckle was Jim Boland, well-known as the cop who beat up Jack Dempsey when Dempsey was serving as bouncer at the now restored Comstock Saloon.

Years later, in 1960, comedian Lenny Bruce was booked on obscenity charges at Central after a performance at the Jazz Workshop. Tried and found innocent in a highly publicized trial, he went back to work doing the same material that had gotten him arrested.

When I started this story in August, the Central Station captain was Anna Giuliani Brown. Since then there has been a change of command. The new captain is Kevin Cashman. Capt. Brown is on a two-month medical/disability leave of absence, which is often the route taken prior to retirement. She has served in the SFPD for 33 years. However, I still want to address a little about Capt. Brown, as hers is a journey most women had to travel with the SFPD.

After serving on patrol at several stations, Brown rose through the ranks. First, as an inspector/sergeant, working in various investigative units (background investigations, domestic violence, sexual assault, the Cargo Theft Task Force and Hate Crimes at the Hall of Justice, then to Ingleside Station as a lieutenant. Then to captain at Central.

Central encompasses a lot of territory. It runs along the north side of Market Street from the Embarcadero to Leavenworth, then north toward the bay where it includes Aquatic Park, and along the waterfront back to Market Street. Seven of the
top-ten tourist destinations are in the Central District, including the Union Square area, Nob Hill, the Financial District, Chinatown, North Beach and Fisherman’s Wharf. There are approximately 90 officers assigned to Central; that number is split into three shifts and different watch-off groups. This number does not include supervisors. There is also a full-time school resource officer. Officers are allocated around the district based on need for a given day or night. Planned and unplanned events are commonplace in the Central District; which sometimes requires a reallocation of resources and help from other stations.

Chief Gascon’s program of “decentralization” has meant that there are now seven inspectors on hand at Central to investigate crimes. There are now three solo bike officers working out of Central, two on days and one on nights. Officers are required to ride buses; two bus inspections daily for every patrol car and four bus inspections for every foot beat officer. Muni barns and cable car turnarounds are also checked regularly.

The goal for Central is to reduce crime. This has been made easier by the use of crime reports. These reports pinpoint what crimes have been committed and where. Officers can then be allocated to the high-crime areas as needed. Crime in the city has gone down this year, and this may be attributed to the decentralization policy and the weekly crime reports. Not surprisingly, some patrol officers can be heard grumbling about the added paperwork. Changes in routine are always slow to be embraced by rank-and-file officers.

I was granted an interview on Sept. 15 with Lt. Edward Santos Jr., chief of investigations, to get information on the recent robbery on the Filbert Street Steps.

The investigation is continuing. Central is working with the Parks and Recreation Park Patrol and Rangers, which has jurisdiction of all city parks. Central investigators are examining surveillance videos and have identified two suspects. Patrols are now being stepped up.

Lt. Santos recommends that the Coit Tower lookout be closed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Logistics with local residents who need egress have yet to be worked out. When this is accomplished, SFPD officers will be able to legally cite violators. This is a move in the right direction, but will take time. Stay tuned.

Also of interest to THD members is the removal of troublemakers from Washington Square due to an increased police presence. Pickpockets abound at congested places. Crowded buses and areas such as Fisherman’s Wharf and Union Square are targets.
They often work in pairs. Capt. Brown noted that women should refrain from the common practice of hooking an open purse over the back of their chair at a restaurant or café, which is a magnet for an alert thief.

The captain indicated that quality-of-life concerns are what she hears most about from residents in the Central District. Homeless outreach officers also work out of Central. They try to get shelter and services for the homeless. They work with the city’s HOT team, MAP, Dore House, North Beach Citizens and other service providers toward this end. However, many homeless refuse services.

THD members need to understand that policing is a community effort. Local complaints led to the removal of the troublemakers at Washington Square. A number of crimes have been solved because vigilant citizens have alerted police. Residents can and should report any suspicious or unusual behavior in their neighborhood. Non-emergency calls should be directed to dispatch, (553-0123), which will then notify available officers to respond.

My thanks to Capt. Brown, current Capt. Kevin Cashman and Lt. Edward Santos Jr., and the staff at Central for their cooperation with this story and to retired deputy chief and historian/writer Kevin Mullen for his insights.

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Those on Social Security benefits or unemployment insurance have sought assistance from NBC. In response, NBC adapted its program to address these low-income residents whose needs simultaneously differ and overlap those of our homeless clients by mobilizing the Community Food Pantry. “A lot of people need the help,” explained participant Elisabeth Frantes. “Having a food pantry means I don’t run out of food at the end of the month. I think the Community Food Pantry is a wonderful thing.”

NBC plans to keep the Community Food Pantry open as long as it has sufficient funds to purchase discounted canned food and fresh fruits and vegetables from the Food Bank. The pantry is off to a great start and NBC hopes the North Beach community will embrace this new initiative, which was made possible by the efforts of NBC’s San Francisco State University intern Jennifer Furlong and our dedicated volunteer base.

The North Beach Citizens Community Food Pantry is open every Wednesday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at 722 Columbus Ave. If you would like to become involved with the Community Food Pantry, please contact NBC at 415-772-0918.
By Judy Irving

**Saving the Stone Pine**

Because of strong and vocal neighborhood protest, the lovely, but leaning, Italian Stone Pine on Montgomery Street will remain. The Department of Public Works has reversed its recommendation that the tree be removed, and has suggested to the Municipal Transit Authority that a “traffic calming” chicane, a curb bulb, be installed around the tree, which will deter large trucks from bashing into it and will also slow traffic on that steep block.

Many tourists cross Montgomery as they walk up the Filbert Steps, and they don’t often look both ways before venturing into the roadway. Slower traffic—particularly trucks and cabs—will mean a safer neighborhood. Most neighbors who have voiced an opinion feel that the loss of one parking space is a small price to pay for a solution that saves a majestic, healthy tree and deals with hurtling cars and trucks, too. The plan also includes supporting the tree and repairing the street.

**Stormwater Diversion on Greenwich Street**

New THD member Mimi Malayan and her partner Sarka Volejnikova (both landscape architects) have proposed a “greening” project for the 600 block of Greenwich between Stockton and Powell streets in which long garden strips would be planted to connect existing tree wells. This would allow rainwater to soak into soil rather than run off into storm drains, which are sometimes flooded in heavy rains.

The pair is also interested in introducing the students of Garfield Elementary School to the hydrology of the urban watershed and the role citizens can play to improve it. They want to include the kids in the project’s installation and maintenance.

Mimi presented the proposed project at the October THD board meeting and asked that we become the applicant on the Public Utilities Commission grant proposal that she and Sarka are preparing. Because we’re not in a position to act as fiscal sponsor or oversee the grant administration, we’re waiting to see if a fiscal sponsor can be found for this great project. If you would like to volunteer in any capacity, let me know (films@pelicanmedia.org) and I’ll put you in touch with Mimi and Sarka.

**Bird-Safe Building Standards**

Over the past year, in connection with our comments on environmental impact reports for proposed new buildings such as the Exploratorium, we have asked that the city develop bird-safe building standards, and now, it appears that our voices have been heard. In early October, a draft version of these new standards was released by the Planning Department staff, and the first hearing was held on Oct. 14th.

We are keeping a close eye on the proceedings, in the hope that new reflective-glass buildings will be required to mitigate for bird strikes. Literally millions of birds are killed each year when they fly into glass skyscrapers that they mistake for sky. Our songbird population has been particularly devastated.

Because San Francisco is located along the Pacific Flyway, our actions will help migratory species — hawks, warblers, etc. — as well as local birds such as the wild parrots. As more hearings on this issue are scheduled, I’ll send out e-mails to THD members who have indicated an interest in “Parks, Trees and Birds.”

Lastly: Belated Thanks to Paul Scott for loaning his LCD projector for Jane Martin’s Plant*SF presentation at Canessa Gallery. Thank you, Paul!
MOOSE’S FRIENDS REMEMBER

Ed Moose, San Francisco’s most-celebrated publican, died Thursday, Aug. 12, of a staph infection acquired while undergoing treatment for a broken ankle.

His wife Mary Etta put out the word that he wanted no memorial service. She said he told her, “I’ve seen memorial services, I’ve thrown memorials services, I’ve gone to memorial services, and I don’t want one.”

But one good friend had another explanation: “He didn’t want a memorial service because he couldn’t be in charge.”

The general outlines of Moose’s tenure in San Francisco are well-known to most North Beachers, but friend Tom Jordan filled in some additional biographical data. “From what I gather, in his teens, Ed aspired to being a Jesuit or a Cardinal (the St. Louis kind, where he grew up), and for a time he was a Jesuit seminarian. However, that life was too confining for his adventurous spirit. He went to work as social worker and as a result never forgot the plight of the poor. He was a newspaper reporter as well as a political activist for affordable housing.”

He met his future partner Sam Deitch, who was then managing a bar in the city’s Gas House District. Through Deitch, he was introduced to Mary Etta Presti, a dynamite lady, who booked acts such as Lenny Bruce and Barbra... continued on page 30

How the Washbag Happened cont’d from page 24

I went and stood in front of it, instead of inside, and looked out and saw Washington Square across the street, “and I said, ‘Wow, you open the windows and you’ve got something’”—a lovely view over a pretty grass-covered plaza and Coit Tower atop Telegraph Hill, Ed recalled.

“So I said, ‘Well, the worst that could happen is that we’ll lose $25,000. We can sell it to somebody else for $20,000.’” An accountant took one look and said, “Don’t do it—there’s no place to park.” But Ed thought, “If people like someplace, they’ll come any- how.” A few days later, he and Sam plunked a check for $25,000 on Rose’s bar, “probably more money than they had seen in one lump,” said Sam, offering cash if they preferred. “Oh, what the hell,” Rose said, and “that was it”—Moose and Deitsch were now the owners.

“I expected not to be a publican,” Ed said of the turn his life suddenly took, “because most of the bartenders whom I knew, my age, were either alcoholics, bankrupt, divorced, or all three. I mean the bar business was fatal.”

Next came the question of a name, compounded by the fact that for a short time they had two Italian bar owners as partners, so “we had three different cultures,” Ed noted, “Jewish, Italian and Irish. But we wanted to have a different” identity from the neighborhood restaurants. They were urged to put their own names on it but “nobody knew who we were,” Sam said. In the end, they combined his fondness for old-time New York establishments — “every corner saloon is called something like ‘Kelly’s Bar and Grill’” — and... continued on page 38
Streisand into an area nightclub. Not long after, the three packed up and left for San Francisco, Ed married Mary Etta, and eventually the trio converted a black hole of a bar into a place that would become legendary, the Washington Square Bar and Grill.

In lieu of the nixed memorial, some of Ed’s friends have contributed reminiscences and reflections.

**Marty Nolan:** Ed’s eye for promotion was keyed to celebration. Les Lapins Sauvages, Moose’s softball team of wild and thirsty rabbits, trekked to national and international fields of dreams. He proudly called himself “a publican, not a Republican.” Eat, drink and have fun. That simple formula, plus great music, produced many a show-biz extravaganza. Herb Caen Day became an annual event. “Let’s celebrate Franklin D. Roosevelt’s birthday,” he said, enlisting me as MC. The showstopper that day was the daughter of a New Deal congressman, Nancy Pelosi.

“Ted Williams deserves a send-off,” Ed declared. To honor the late slugger, he invited Willie McCovey and Pugsie Green to hear grand tales from Hank Greenwald and Dave Burgin.

**Stephanie Salter,** former San Francisco reporter and columnist: Traveling the first few years with Les Lapins Sauvages (as the team’s “official scorer”), I came to appreciate the era and Ed’s characteristic élan. I mean, really, a few dozen San Franciscans flying to Paris to play softball in the Bois de Bologne? It was absurd, but, of course, a very magical San Francisco thing to do.

**Tom Whelan:** When it came to Washington Square, it was his passion to reverse the ravages of gross commercialization and official neglect of the public square. Linda Firmrite, who often served as hostess as a labor of love at Moose’s joints, once tugged on my arm to see if she could get a good print of the photo of Ed I once published in a local newspaper; Ed is pictured smiling (sort of) and holding a bursting bouquet of flowers as he stops along a stroll of his beloved Washington Square. Linda explained that Ed’s friends saw this image with a certain irony, yet she loved it.

**Ken Maley:** Beginning in the ‘70s, I handled special events for Ed at the Washington Square Bar and Grill. (He didn’t like the popular expression “Washbag,” a name concocted by Herb Caen). His establishments were legendary for attracting bold-faced-type celebrities, but whether you were a famous face or a stranger, Ed would extend his hand and smile in welcome as though he’d known you for years.

Yet, Ed could be difficult with staff and friends alike. He could be arbitrary, tough and demanding, setting high standards for friendship and professionalism. It would take some accounting to recall the numerous bartenders, chefs, servers, busers and hostesses that worked for him during the three decades he was the toast of North Beach. The food and beverage industry throughout the country is now staffed with

**continued on next page**
many of his former employees. Scores of them turned out to toast him at a staff reunion last June, spilling out onto the street at Amante’s on Green Street.

**Ernie Beyl:** Ed Moose was one of the most generous persons I ever knew. He could also be a thrifty guy. Humorist and Chronicle columnist Stan Delaplane, a mentor of mine from my Chronicle days, ate lunch daily at the Washington Square Bar & Grill. He took me there and that’s how I got to know Moose. Delaplane died in 1988 and Moose decided to invite a few of Delaplane’s closest friends to the Square for a memorial drink and lunch. On arrival at the Square, we gathered at the small (two person) table where Delaplane always ate. Moose had installed a brass plaque at the table signifying it was always reserved for Stanton Delaplane.

On that table Moose had placed an ash tray with a burning cigarette (Delaplane smoked), and a martini straight-up, filled to the brim—just as though Delaplane was there with us.

Moose suggested we drink a farewell toast to the columnist. Everyone had drinks in their hands. I was the last to arrive and hadn’t yet gotten a drink. So, I picked up the martini meant for Delaplane’s spirit and held it aloft. We all toasted and I downed the martini in one gulp. It was water, not gin. I yelled out, “Moose, this martini is nothing but water.”

Unabashed, Moose said, “Well, Delaplane shouldn’t really be drinking anymore.”

**Jerry Gibbons:** During a recent lunch our conversation drifted to things we could have done better. Here, Ed acknowledged that while he was gregarious and really good with important customers, he could have treated some people better — particularly people that worked for him, but some others as well. Ed conceded that he focused too much on business, He was never patient and at times could be thoughtless, short and, perhaps, even crabby.

I asked Ed if he had ever done anything to get back into the good graces of those he might have offended. He smiled and said, “No not really. I guess I felt that most people would kind of understand, and anyway everyone loved Mary Etta so much they would eventually forgive me.”

I think almost everyone did.
The Third Annual North Beach ArtWalk was a great success. Fifty locations representing more than 45 artists put North Beach back on the San Francisco art map. The private reception at Live Worms Gallery to start the weekend was crowded with many of the artists and people from local businesses on the ArtWalk map.

The gallery’s walls were filled with a piece by each of the artists. Fine-art photography, oil paintings, portraits, abstracts, collages, masks, cast-metal wall pieces and mixed-media art comprised a varied and interesting show.

The postcard machine, a six-foot canvas enclosure, was operated by Michelle Ott. Creative and delightful sound effects invited people to select from a dial of handmade postcard offerings: putting $2 in the money slot would release the card.

Silvi Alcivar, the Three Minute Poet, set up a desk with a vintage typewriter offering a selection of papers, subject and price for an instant poem.

Julie Jaycox, chair of the Art & Culture Committee, visited numerous artists on Saturday and Sunday. She confirms that most artists reported good traffic, modest sales and the very enjoyable experience of sharing their work with the public.

Much thanks to the various volunteers who assisted in the creation of the ArtWalk map and poster, to those who posted, to those who received or released the art work at Live Worms, hung the show and staffed the gallery during the weekend. Gratitude to Cafe Zoetrope for a generous donation of wines and to the Italian-French Bakery for fresh focaccia. A surprise sausage donation came from Joe Butler and Joe at Little City Meats. Thanks to Janet Clyde at Vesuvio for assisting with the permitting

continued on next page
of music in Jack Kerouac Alley for the third year in a row.

Finally, to all the artists and businesses who participated in this year’s event—thank you! It was a lot of fun!

Committee Members Upcoming Exhibitions

Susan Weisberg will be participating in a group show of women artists at Mina Dresden Gallery, 312 Valencia St., from Dec. 9 to Jan. 9. Opening reception, Dec. 9, 6 pm–8 pm; other exhibition hours by appointment (call 415-863-3812).

Angela Manginelli’s photographs will be exhibited in Tableaux Californiens, a group show at Live Worms, 1345 Grant Ave., Dec. 2 and 3 from noon to 11 pm, each day. Reception Thursday, Dec. 2 at 7 pm.

Nature’s Geometry: Surprises of Botanical Design, photographs by Julie Jaycox

Runs through the end of the year at the horticulture library in the San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way, Wed.–Sat. 10 am–4 pm Entry to the library is free (415-661-1316, ext. 403).

Art Walk committee members: Lynn Sanchez, Julie Jaycox, Angela Manginelli, Susan Weisberg

Art & Culture chair Julie Jaycox picks up focaccia for pre-art walk party.

Singer Carol Peters entertains a fan at Music in the Alley.

A Saturday Live Worms visitor with painting by Anna Seavey
Rochelle Jacobs sings in Kerouac Alley during the ArtWalk.

Photo by Angela Manginelli

Lucia Gonnella outside of Mama’s restaurant.

Tony Long reads at Trieste.

Photo by Julie Jaycox
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IT’S NOT JUST BREAKFAST & LUNCH ANYMORE —
NOW OPEN FOR DINNERS WEDNESDAY THRU SATURDAY!
June 15, 2010 THD Board meeting

Motion: THD Board Vacancy
President Vedica Puri will appoint Lynn Sanchez to fill the THD Board position vacated by Pat Lusse. (Passed Unanimously)

THD resolution regarding Recreation and Parks Commission appointments: The THD Board voted to support the Charter Amendment to split appointments to the Recreation and Parks Commission. The full text of this amendment was included on page 21 of the June 2010 THD Board packet. (Passed unanimously.)

July 13, 2010 THD Board meeting

Minutes taken by Judy Irving
No motions passed.

August 10, 2010 THD Board meeting

Motion: The THD Board approves joining a public-interest lawsuit to challenge the city’s failure to conduct environmental review under CEQA on the Northern and NE Waterfront study resolution. This is subject to an agreement that the THD will not be liable for any attorneys fees or costs associated with this lawsuit. (Passed unanimously)
ARCHIVES ALERT!

by Rozell Overmire, THD Archivist

For many THD members, the THD Archives is a nonentity. Where is it? How is it used? Why keep all those papers and photographs and awards?

For nearly 60 years it has been piling up. It is now in order in a North Beach basement. Many of the articles and photographs we use in The Semaphore come from archival records, especially when we celebrate the significant birthdays of the organization. Records help us prove our point and sometimes bring in dollars. We can go back in time and see how other THD presidents and board members solved the old problems of height limits, bus route cancellation, beautifying the neighborhood, cleaning up the neighborhood, entertaining its members and supporting the community. Through our oral history records, we see how people lived here in the past and through photographs we see members contributing their time and effort to local causes.

Is it worth keeping? At present, the board members believe it is. The THD Archives has been offered to the Bancroft Library several times, but members have always vetoed it. For a volunteer effort, it is remarkable. Why write this article? Your trusty archivist is moving from North Beach. So we need to find a new person or small group of members to maintain the archives. It boils down to keeping an index up to date so members can access the archives. Each drawer in the file cabinets has an index sheet with the file folder names on it. By pulling out the index sheet, it is a quick way to find subject matter. A binder with all the file cabinet index sheets is kept as well (several copies for security). All this has been put in computer files so it can easily be updated.

We need your help. Please call Rozell Overmire, 415-989-3945 or e-mail Rozell@ureach.com so that I can show you how to keep the archives in good health and an asset to the organization. Keeping the history of THD is up to you.

HELP THE ‘HOOD

Shop Locally

How the Washbag Happened continued from page 29

Ed’s wish to incorporate the name of the park. Sam found no bars-and-grills listed in the telephone directory, so they called it the “Washington Square Bar & Grill,” briefly suffering the derision of New Yorkers.

“You couldn’t legally call it a saloon,” a hangover from roisterous Barbery Coast days, “and everybody knew where Washington Square was, it was on every map, every bus driver knew how to get there.” “A thrill of a lifetime” occurred several years later when he heard a bus driver announce “Washington Square Bar & Grill” as the next stop! Sam never liked abbreviated versions that quickly took hold like “Washbag” and “The Bag.” Reflecting Mary Etta’s concern for graphics, artist Larry Green designed a whimsical logo with an exaggerated ampersand and they hung out a sign.

“It was a dump,” said Ed who talked the architect brothers Eden into minimal remodeling on a $6,000 budget. The front windows were opened up to let in the view and on Labor Day, 1973, they opened for business. Bar customers had to wear hard hats while renovation was under way, which included annexing an adjoining room formerly leased to an exotic-fish store.

And the rest, as they say, is history.
STANDING COMMITTEES

Parking and Transportation. 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@nwp.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. David Smolen, treasurer@thd.org. As prescribed in Bylaws for Treasurer.

Membership. Chris Stockton, membership@thd.org. As prescribed in Bylaws for Financial Secretary.

Archivist: Rozell Overmire, rozell@ureach.com

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

Parks, Trees, and Birds. Judy Irving, chair. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

THD Website. Webmaster, Al Fontes; webmaster@thd.org. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

Art and Culture. Julie Jaycox, chair. Organizes events and projects that celebrate the art and humanities of our neighborhood.

liaisons with other organizations

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; 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. 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

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

THD Welcomes the following new members and members who have rejoined, March-April:
New Members: Lela Jahn & Don Bayer, Mike Buhler, Vivian & Bruce Ettinger, Lucas Fleetham, Pamela Fortino, Jim Gordon, Lisa Chen & Jeff Jan, Mimi Malayan, Red Jack Saloon, Joan Robles, Rebecca Rogers, Kirk Thompson, Nancy Bertossa & Robert Van Dale, Harry Whitehouse
Former Members Who Have Rejoined: Pat & Anthony Ley, Janet & Jesse Martinez, Pat Swan

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__

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS
Schedules of Committee Meetings
PLANNING & ZONING: Last 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