Vol. XLVI, No. 1

January 2022

THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

More Words to Raise

Short Fiction, Poetry, Essays and Non-Fiction from Local Writers

By Jack Tipple

This edition of the *Voice* allows editors of the news and feature stories and columnists to take a break until mid-January, when they'll be back crafting a February paper.

Timely Tales and Observations

In the meantime, local writers, and those with strong connections to the *Voice* and the neighborhood have submitted compelling works of fiction, poetry and reviews.

We begin with Jody Reiss and a moving excerpt from her newly published book *Looking Back: AIDS Tales and Teachings.* Other new contributors Daniel Raskin and Michael Bloom paint enticing portraits of what's in the sky. Raskin with his *Perseid Bean Party* and Bloom with *Can You Land This Plane.*

Sandy Nakamura returns to these pages with her vivid family portraits in *Margarita?* and *Gravel*.

Former contributing journalist Bill Yard who now lives in San Diego pens an engaging slice of life in his story *Table Seven*. And artist Grace D'Anca provides two poems *Cross Hairs of Truth and Ego; after Q R Hand* and *Birthday Boy*, She's now published five of her poems in the *Voice*.

LisaRuth Elliott's many talents are steeped with organic craft and here she illustrates her own essay *Winter Backyard Birding in San Francisco*.

Julie Lekach House first appeared in the August 2021 *Noe Valley Voice*. This time she offers an amusing recollection from her teenage years with *Do You Wash Your Hair Often?*

Tim Simmers is a veteran *Voice* reporter who now makes his home in Modesto. He offers an interesting book review of *Every Day We Get More Illegal* by Juan Felipe Herrera.

Jeff Kaliss, whose byline is familiar to *Voice* readers, provides his poem *North on Church*.

Moonstruck. On May 28 in the early morning hours, our photographer looked up from the corner of Diamond and Alvarado streets to capture the Super Full Moon that would coincide with a lunar eclipse. *Photo by Gabe Castro Root*

Now and the Future

We expect these words to move and entertain you. Hopefully they'll bring you windows to new vistas that you'll want to see more of.

In February you'll see these pages filled with news and features from the neighborhood. Our columns *Cost of Living, Short Take*s and *Rumors* will return. And our next edition to feature creative writing will be published in August. If you're interested in contributing, your deadline is July 15.

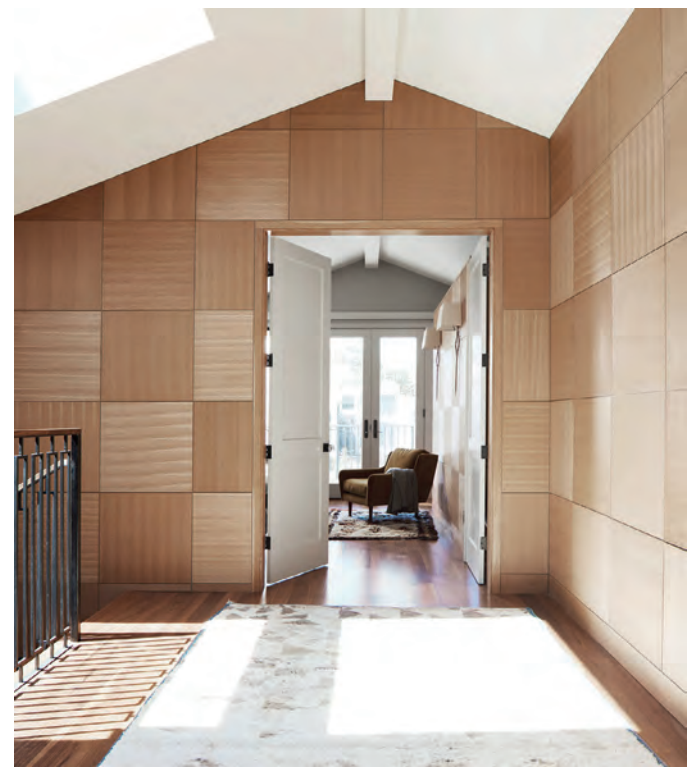
Always and Forever Grateful

This edition brings us to Volume 46 (XLVI), and though it is a labor of love, it could not be printed without the financial support of the many local advertisers we've depended on all these years. The names of the business owners and operators you see in these pages have served to make us the premier community newspaper in San Francisco. We count them as friends and partners in our ongoing success.

Readers too have chipped in. Inside you'll see how you can also join those who make the *Voice* possible each month.

Here's to a happy and successful 2022. May we learn to live without fear and always with hope.

A Way of Seeing. Capture an image and let it shine. Or rather, allow the light that is hidden within to come forward. We all have the abilities an artist can exercise. With those, we can enrich our own experience and that of the community. Noe Valley photographer Najib Joe Hakim provides a wealth of examples of this communion in his work. *Photo by Najib Joe Hakim*



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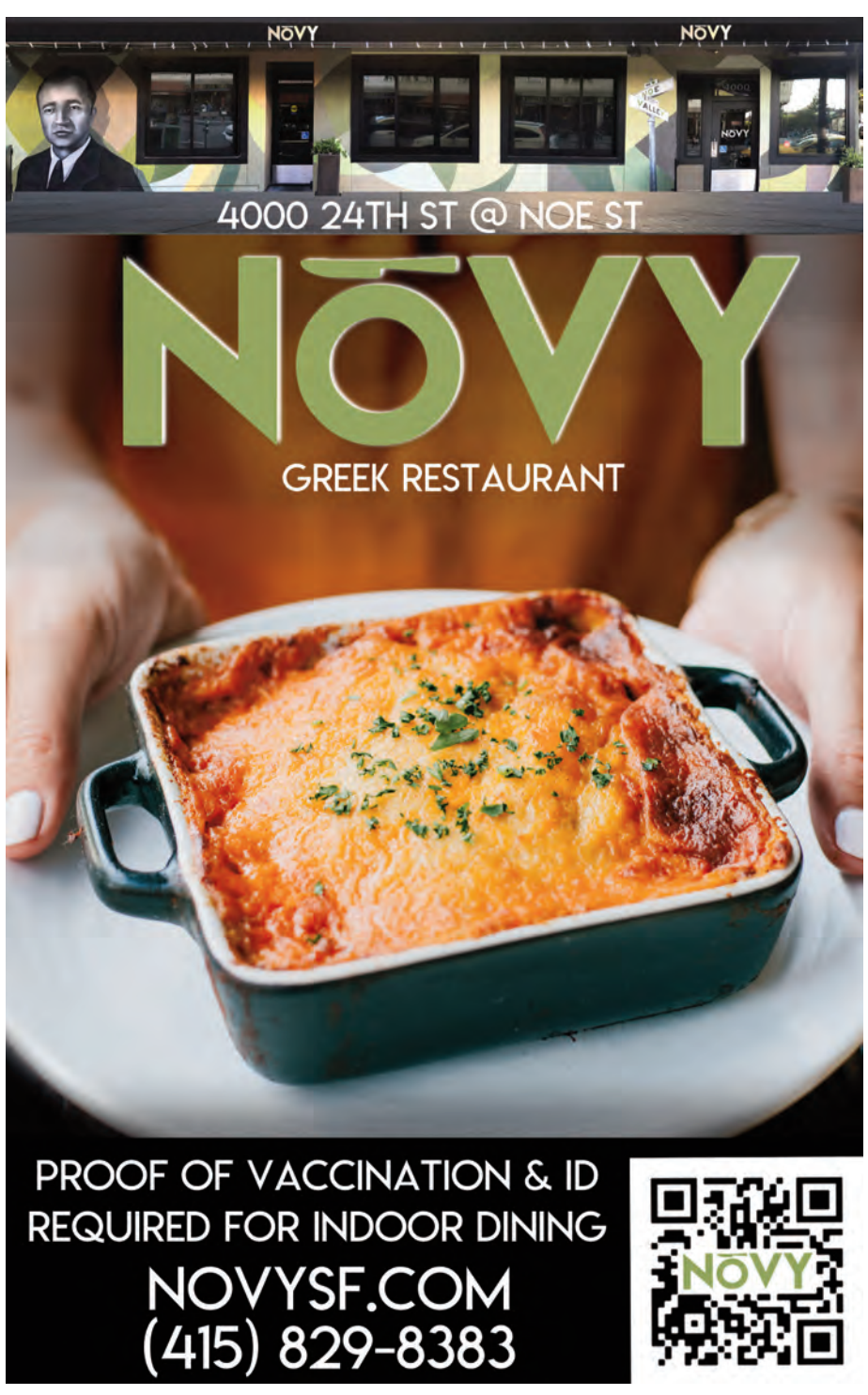

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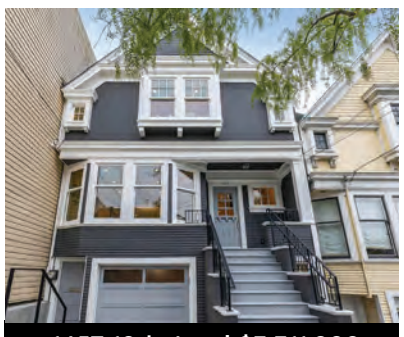
The pendulum keeps swinging... 2021 started out of the gate very strong. The 2020 presidential election was saved, the vaccine rolled out, and a collective sigh of relief was breathed. A buying frenzy started back up almost immediately. But then the Delta variant reared its ugly head over the summer. The Delta variant looks like it has been beaten back, but now we have Omicron. Confronting these pandemic ups and downs looks like it is the new normal. Interest rates have started to creep back up, and inflation seems like it may be more of a long term issue than just a fleeting problem. Both of which should be inspiring home buyers to make a move. How will the 2022 market respond? **As a top SF realtor for 15 years, Jessica is an expert at timing, strategy and preparing property for successful sales. If you are considering selling your home, make sure to interview Jessica, and let her intelligence, experience, and wisdom guide you! Her record of success speaks for itself.**



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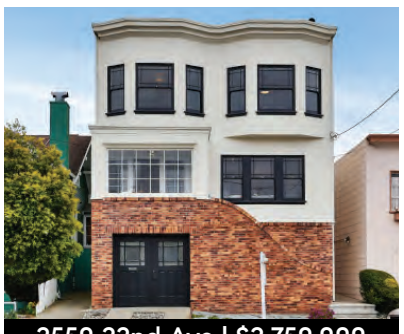
EversonMidCentury.com

20 Hill Street | $4,040,000
LibertyHillBeauty.com

Address Confidential | $3,150,000
ColeValleyDream.com

28 Hill Point Ave | $2,754,000
ColeValleyDelight.com

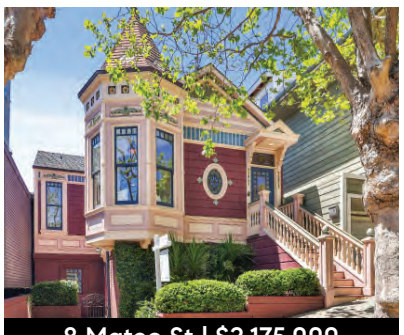


2550 22nd Ave | $2,750,000
ParksideDelight.com

109 Wool St | $2,635,000
ModernBernalMasterpiece.com

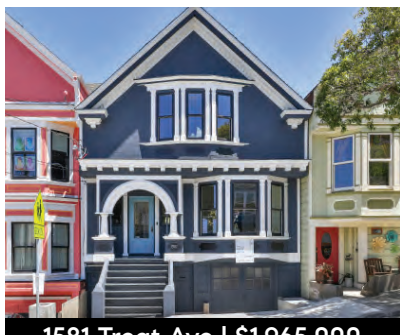
349 Banks St | $2,601,290
BanksStreetBeauty.com

564 Diamond St | $2,525,000
NoeValleyDiamond.com

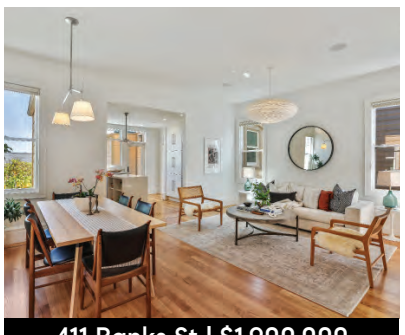


8 Mateo St | $2,175,000
GlenParkVictorianGem.com

1836 Golden Gate | $2,120,000
NOPADreamCondo.com



1581 Treat Ave | $1,965,000
DreamOnTreat.com



411 Banks St | $1,900,000
BeautifulinBernal.com

390 Chapman St | $1,875,000
BernalHeightsBeauty.com

1778 48th Ave | $1,850,000
BeautifulBeachHouse.com

2025 Hayes St | $1,800,000
BeautifulNOPACondo.com

3316 Folsom St | $1,800,000
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Santa's Gone. And the storms of December have left us with some clean up. But the spirit of renewal remains strong even if it's now asleep. *Photo by Jack Tipple*

STOP MALE SUPREMACY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH! ORDAIN WOMEN PRIESTS!

After serving as a Catholic priest for 40 years, I was expelled from the priesthood because of my public support for the ordination of women.

An all-loving God created women and men of equal worth and dignity and called both to be priests.

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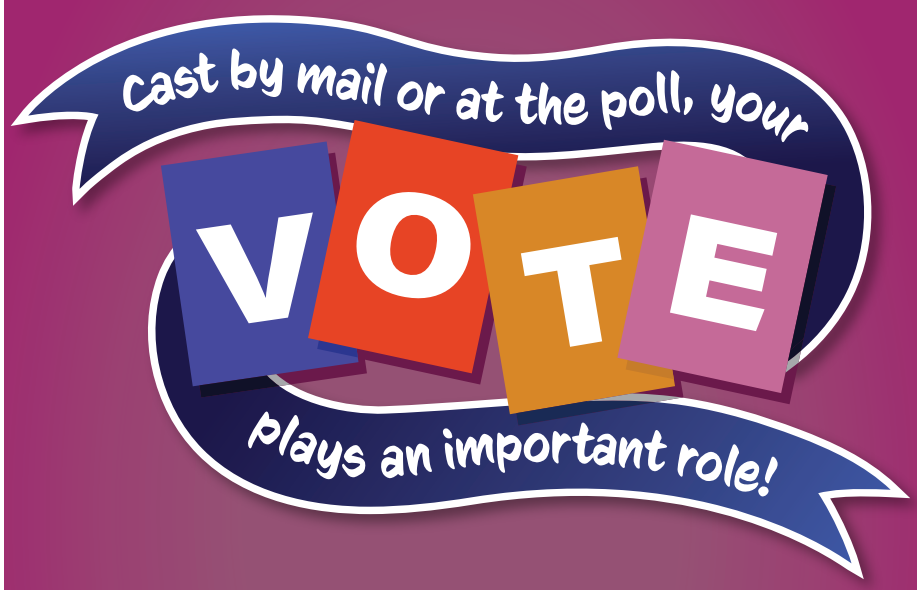
February 15, 2022

Consolidated Special Municipal Election



Register to vote online at ***RegisterToVote.ca.gov*** or contact the Department of Elections to request a paper registration form.

New!

The Department of Elections will provide 34 official ballot drop boxes in neighborhoods across the City. Ballot boxes will be open 24 hours a day between January 18 and the close of polls (8 p.m.) on February 15. For locations, go to ***sfelections.org/BallotDropOff***.

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RISING VOICES

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The Mothers

By Jody Reiss

(from Looking Back: AIDS Tales and Teachings*)*

Photo by Jack Tipple

I think about the mothers. The mothers in their small towns whose sons have left them long ago for the freedom of the city, the distance with which to hide the way they live, who they are. But the mothers, the mothers have always known; they are after all, the mothers.

Catherine stopped dead in the middle of her vacuuming as her son Jesse came through the door of the modest Tennessee farmhouse. He came to surprise her for Easter, and she was so surprised she could barely catch her breath. She just stared at him. He looked only a little paler, but otherwise no worse for the wear and tear of this disease she didn't understand and the treatment he was getting for it way up north. He was just her little boy come to surprise his mother. And then she reached for a hug.

Kerry's mother died long ago of cancer.

Wilfredo's mother came from Puerto Rico too late to find him lucid.

Brad's mother crossed over the yellow line and hit a cement truck.

Mary gave up her son for adoption, unwed mother working towards a career. But he found her 40 years later just before he was diagnosed, and she moved across the country to live with him and raise his three teenagers. As he got sicker, he talked of suicide a lot and she went out to find needles and drugs so he'd have that option. But when it came time, he didn't want to have it end that way, and Mary was hurt that he wouldn't accept her offering.

Julio's mother wasn't allowed out of El Salvador to visit him.

Tony's mother stayed with him all the time, even came to support group with him.

Dennis didn't want to tell his mother.

Melvin's mother was scared to have him in the house.

Kaye lost them both. Both her sons, boys of separate marriages, all the children she'd had. Richard, born with only one arm, growing up rebellious to become a troubled man living on the edge in New York City, hustling his body to other men, hustling drugs to anyone who'd buy. And Nick, sensitive, artistic, fighting a battle with alcohol with the help of his lover of ten years and their settled lifestyle. Never mind all the differences; both caught AIDS, and Kaye, the retired nurse, nursed them both through their final illnesses: toxoplasmosis, the same for both. And then she went home with her husband and founded the Seaside AIDS Project.

David's mother came from Mississippi and cried a lot.

Kevin's mother was with him when he died in the monastery to which he'd belonged for 28 years.

Craig's mother held his hand all the several days he was on a respirator.

Teresa taught third grade in New Jersey. All that spring Jeff was bedridden, she drove the five hours down to D.C. every Friday night to spend the weekend cooking big Italian meals and coaxing him to eat, cleaning the tiny apartment, entertaining his friends. And then drove the five hours back Sunday night in time for school on Monday. In the summer she moved in for the duration. In the end he wanted to go to the beach of his childhood one last time, so her family bundled his tiny wasted body up and took him there. He got to see the boardwalk once more before he died in his mother's arms early in August.

Jody Reiss, San Francisco native and longtime Noe Valley resident, spent 18 years working as an AIDS social worker in the early days. She has written Looking Back: AIDS Tales and Teachings, *available for $10 at Lulu.com in the Bookstore section.*

be patient
be persistent
be powerless

be home.

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LETTERS 58¢

Giants Weren't Playing Fair

Editor,

UCSF's Dr, Bob Wachter is quoted in Liz Highleyman's article about "Living with COVID" in the November 2021 Noe Valley Voice saying the following:

"I went to a Giants game a couple of weeks ago and that felt fine. I wore a mask when I went to get a hot dog, but not sitting outside in my seat. Outdoors in a place that's checking vaccine status feels very safe."

Dr. Wachter is surely mistaken. The Giants stopped checking fans for vaccine status many months ago. Indeed, although the season is over, the Giant's website still sports a banner headline reading: NO COVID-19 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS.

I work as a food concession cashier at the ballpark, am a proud member of UNITE HERE Local 2, and served on our Union's negotiating committee during the recent bargaining that led to a new contract. The ballpark may have felt safe to Dr. Wachter, but it certainly did not feel safe to many of its workers during the recent season.

Bon Appetit, our employer and the Giant's food service subcontractor, flouted state law for most of the season with regard to reporting COVID-19 infections. The Giants similarly flouted the reporting laws regarding their workers, and failed to make any serious effort to enforce masking and COVID-19 safety rules at the concession stands.

In addition, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) has refused to date to release documents concerning their decision to end checking fans for vaccine status at the ballpark. To the best of our knowledge, SFDPH has done nothing to trace or quantify COVID-19 infections of fans and/or workers that have happened at the ballpark.

Finally, near the end of the season, after our Union contract was settled, over 400 food concession workers petitioned the Giants to restore checking the vaccine status of fans. The Giants did not even deign to respond to our petition.

Marc Norton
29th Street

Hello Kitty. One of the larger canine friends you may meet at Bernie's or on 24th Street is this sweetheart named Kitty. He's a three year old Bernese Mountain Dog. According to Wikipedia, Kitty descends from the Sennenhund-type dogs from the Swiss Alps who accompany alpine herders and dairymen. The breed was originally kept as a general farm dog and also used as a draft animal, pulling carts.

Our well mannered Noe Valley resident has lighter duty and is usually found cheering up all he comes in contact with on his neighborhood rambles.

The Race is On

Editor,

San Francisco just began running in a race where the starting gun fired decades ago. As you might imagine, we're way behind where we need to be, though the teams we're running against aren't doing a lot better. Many of them are just standing around, some haven't even gotten to the starting line, and some are pretending there is no race. And us? We've taken a few baby steps forward; we've finally started. But in this race for survival, the race to mitigate and adapt to climate change while we can still have an impact, San Francisco's final standing will have more to do with running now than with waiting for everyone else to start, too. San Francisco has taken a few baby steps, and that's good. This race is an ultramarathon; we need to be sprinting flat out right now.

Ellen Koivisto

Sidewalk Safety

Editor,

I used to walk up to Noe Valley to shop, but do so less often. I am tired of jumping aside skateboarders speeding on the sidewalk. There are also a lot of bicyclists on the sidewalk. There used to be signs up forbidding these actions but these were never placed high enough to avoid them being stolen and are probably now decorating the walls of teenagers. Compare with the height of such signs on Mission Street, where they are unreachable. I have pointed this out to the police numerous times with no results.

Stephen Karetzky
Guerrero St.

THE NOE VALLEY VOICE
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The *Voice* welcomes your letters, photos, and stories, particularly on topics relating to Noe Valley. All items should include your name and contact information, and may be edited for brevity or clarity. (Unsigned letters will not be considered for publication.) Unsolicited contributions will be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Raising More Words In Noe Valley

The next *Noe Valley Voice* edition with a literary focus will be published in August, 2022.

Local writers are hereby encouraged to submit their work by emailing it to editor@noevalleyvoice.com by July 15th.

Please use 750 words as a limit, and submit in MS Word or in the body of your email.

Write a short bio for yourself and include any pertinent information on where your other work can be found.

No payment is provided, but you'll gain exposure to thousands of new readers.

Thank you for helping the *Voice* to Raise The Words.

— Jack Tipple,
Editor and Co-Publisher

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Perseid Bean Party

By Daniel Raskin

The August night of the Perseid Meteors, we revelers at the yearly "Poor Man's Meat" party ate *pasta y fragoile,* Cincinnati Five Way Chili and a rattlesnake bean chili. One family contributed Boston Baked Beans and some teens from Las Cruces, New Mexico brought a version made with Appaloosas. There were dal and roti, refries with cheddar, Hoppin' John, an impressive *Fejoada completa*, and home made hummus. A family of latecomers arrived with mujadara buried under caramelized onions, and we ended the meal lightly with agadashi tofu. There were sweet bean cakes for dessert. The new babies, ready for solid food, got initiated to legumes that August night of the shooting stars, a ritual that was the custom among our crowd of old friends, going back to the 1960's.

After beans in the field folded their leaves, the fog billowed in and froze out the party; time to catch shooting stars. We headed south, climbing the ridge of the Santa Cruz Mountains, on California 35. We got above the fog, dipped back down into it, in and out again, finally above the fog for good, Borel Hill, Russian Ridge, above Palo Alto. There was a faint glow at the horizon to the southeast from San Jose, 2500 feet below. Otherwise, we had the night to ourselves.

Photo by Jack Tipple

We cast beans around the ground for good luck seeing a wondrous star show. We zipped sleeping bags together and cozied in, the babies on their daddies' chests, looking heaven-ward. Blue fireballs, white pin stripe flashes, yellow and red streaks crossed the Milky Way in the moonless sky.

Bats flitted through the air. An owl swooshed over our heads, leaving behind its feathery aroma.

We told Perseus story. King Polydectes wanted him out of the way so Perseus would not be able to stop Polydectes from marrying his captured mother, Danae. He challenged Perseus to bring him the head of the Gorgon Medusa, whose stare turned people to stone. He expected Perseus never to return. But Perseus had help. Hermes loaned him winged sandals. Zeus gave a sword and The Helmet of Invisibility. Athena provided a gleaming shield to reflect Medusa. That way Perseus could see Medusa without looking at her fatal gaze. The Hesperides gave him a sack to hold Medusa's head until he needed it to turn Polydectes to stone. "Ohs," "Ahs," and "Did you see that one," framed the story of the meteor shower's namesake.

Riding home in the early dawn, the sleepers in the back seat didn't wake even when we screeched to a halt to save two fawns blinded by our headlights. Later, we slept until supper and then cooked up some sausage to go with leftover beans. The babies on laps licked their rose bud lips and opened their mouths for more. "Mmmm, mmmm, mmm."

2014

Daniel Raskin is a retired preschool teacher, living in Bernal Heights. He writes with Laguna Writers. Daniel has co-authored a children's story, My Idea. *He enjoys beans and chases meteor showers at every opportunity.*

Can You Land This Plane?

By Michael C. Bloom

The thought occurred to me, that I should ask myself, "Can you land this plane?"

Which plane?" is how I see and hear myself answering…myself. "X, Y or Z?" I watch myself giggle after this quip, and see I am holding a bong with my left hand and a glass of sake with my right – as I am in the cockpit of this Hurricane Fighter Plane. An empty bottle rolls toward me, the only passenger, on the floor as we descend in a rolling fashion, seemingly weightless in the air. I stop the bottle with my right foot, and look at the label. It reads 'Ether'. I remark in the softest whisper as the roar of the airplane engine drowns out the sound of my prayer.

"Jesus Christ. We're all gonna die." I look up again, and see a blackboard, and someone writing. It's a lesson, physics. It's suddenly eighth grade and I remember it vividly. The teacher writes 'F=Mg' on the blackboard as I hear him say.

"Pop quiz. Force equals mass times gravity. That means Force is determined by the mass of the body times the force of gravity." The teacher, his name was Roentgen, looking to finish his equation turns in my direction and calls on me. "Michael. What is the formula for the force of gravity?"

"9.807 meters per second squared." I feel myself say from my lips as I am looking at myself in a mirror, now 50 years old. Looking at the crows feet around my eyes, the age spots and sagging skin beneath the lower lids. "Land this plane?" The comedic thought then dawns on me, as if I am John Belushi. "Land this plane? I built this plane. It's gonna be a hard landing though."

"How about some music?" I say to the very worried looking passenger, who reminds me of myself when I was 30 years younger. Turbulence can really affect some people, I think to myself, as I cue up my favorite song from the Death Valley Girls - 'Disaster (It's what We're After)'.

I smile at the synchronicity and push the nose down, for our final approach into…2022.

Michael C. Bloom is a transplant from New York City, now living in Twin Peaks. He holds a Master's Degree in Bioethics from NYU.

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Author Events In-Person!

By Richard May

Bookstores Gear Up for Cooking and Reading

Both our neighborhood bookstores are hosting in-person author events in January. Omnivore Books on Food presents the authors of two new cookbooks in-store, and Folio Books features a graphic novelist zooming in to a live, local audience.

Hope Larson will be reading from her graphic novel *Salt Magic* and talking about her book, which was published in October by Penguin Random House. Written for readers aged 10 to 14, this fantasy is set just after World War One and involves witches, shapeshifters, and what it means to love. The audience is welcome to attend Friday, Jan. 14, 5 p.m. at Bethany United Methodist, 1270 Sanchez St. Admission is free, but space is limited. Register at www.foliosf.com/events.

Omnivore is hosting two events at the store on the weekend of Jan. 22-23. The first is author Leanne Brown Saturday, Jan. 22. She'll discuss her book *Good Enough: A Cookbook Embracing the Joys of Imperfection and Practicing Self-Care in the Kitchen* at 3 p.m. The following day, Sunday, Jan. 23, Michelle Tam and Henry Fong offer "crazy-delicious recipes for all occasions," according to store owner Celia Sack. Check out their ideas in *Nom Nom Paleo: Let's Go!* at 3 p.m. Both events are free. Omnivore Books on Food is at 3885 Cesar Chavez St.

Henry Fong and Michelle Tam

JANUARY & FEBRUARY EVENTS AT OMNIVORE BOOKS

SAT JAN 22	**LEANNE BROWN + GOOD ENOUGH: A COOKBOOK EMBRACING THE JOYS OF IMPERFECTION AND PRACTICING SELF-CARE IN THE KITCHEN. IN CONVERSATION WITH SARAH NELSON + 3:00 P.M. FREE!** A generous mix of essays, stories and recipes, *Good Enough* is about self-compassion, and knowing it's OK to have a cheese plate for dinner. There are no judgments here.
SUN JAN 23	**MICHELLE TAM & HENRY FONG + NOM NOM PALEO: LET'S GO! + 3:00 P.M . FREE!** Whether you're cooking for yourself, whipping up a family dinner or preparing a special-occasion feast free of grains, gluten, dairy, and refined sugar, N*om Nom Paleo: Let's Go!* will inspire you with deliciously nourishing meals.
SUN JAN 30	**EDGAR CASTREJON + PROVECHO: 100 VEGAN MEXICAN RECIPES TO CELEBRATE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY + 3:00 P.M . FREE!** Edgar spent countless hours with his family in their Oakland kitchen where recipes were passed down through "las manos mágicas." With that inspiration, *Provecho* features vegan recipes that honor the traditional classics of Mexican and Latin American culture while cooking with compassion.
SUN FEB 6	**FAITH KRAMER + 52 SHABBATS: FRIDAY NIGHT DINNERS INSPIRED BY A GLOBAL JEWISH KITCHEN. IN CONVERSATION WITH DIANNE JACOB + 3:00 P.M . FREE!** With 75 recipes reinterpreted for today's tastes and essays about how shabbat fits into modern family's lives, *52 Shabbats* focuses on how to bring shabbat rituals into the homes of young Jewish families.
SUN FEB 13	**VASANTI BHADKAMKAR-BALAN + AUTHENTIC INDIAN COOKING WITH YOUR INSTANT POT: CLASSIC AND INNOVATIVE RECIPES FOR THE HOME COOK + 3:00 P.M . FREE!** Bring the complex flavors and alluring aromas of Indian cooking into your kitchen with this diverse collection of recipes that leverage the Instant Pot® to impart layers of flavor to masalas and curries in less time than the traditional preparation.

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Email your work to editor@noevalleyvoice.com
750 words max. And include information about you and your work for a brief (approx. 30 words) bio.

No payment, but your work will be exposed to thousands of new readers.

Deadline is Monday, July 18th
Thank you!

To Raise The Words

RISING VOICES

fiction, poetry, essays, nonfiction • the noe valley voice

Margarita?

By Sandy Nakamura

Photo by Jack Tipple

I woke up one Saturday morning and poured myself a cup of coffee and was sitting in the kitchen of my parents' old home, the house they had lived in for more than fifty-five years. Papa san was still sleeping, so I savored the quiet and beauty of the morning. The kitchen was bright with the sunlight shining through the curtains above the sink. It was so bright, it was as if someone had turned on a bright light. Even though it was early morning it was already warm, and I knew we would have a blistering heat wave that day. It's always scorching hot in the summer in Fresno. I guessed it was going to be 105 degrees that afternoon.

I set the kitchen table with Papa san's usual breakfast dishes, a bowl for his cereal and a small glass for his orange juice. Without fail, he always ate cereal with 2% milk and sliced bananas on top. As soon as I had finished setting Papa san's dishes, he shuffled in wearing his worn-out and paper-thin pajamas, bathrobe, and slippers, and he sat in his chair against the south side window. He appeared to have had a good night's sleep and I remember that made me feel good.
"Good morning! Did you sleep well?", I said.
He wasn't much of a talker and quietly said, "Yes."
As I counted out his medications for the day, I was thinking of something to say that might put a smile on his face and asked, "Hey, you wanna go out for Mexican food and a margarita tonight?"
"NO", he said abruptly.
I was surprised by his response because I knew he loved drinking margaritas and eating Coctel de Camarones at Toledo's Mexican Restaurant in the little shopping mall at the intersection of Fresno Street and Shaw Avenue. It was something that he and Mom would do often. Papa san's reply made the little girl inside of me feel sad. My little girl was only eight years old and she had her feelings hurt deeply. I couldn't understand why he had rejected my invitation.
Before I could shake off my sadness, Papa san said, "I think you should gather up all of Mom's things and take them to the Veterans' organization."
"Today? Right now?", I asked. "Yeah, today", he said.

I was not prepared to take on such a huge and emotional task that day but did as I was told out of respect for my father. I did not want to disobey him. I somehow mustered up the strength to drive myself to the U-HAUL store on Kings Canyon Road to pick up storage boxes, packing tape, and bubble wrap to box up Mom's belongings and so many endearing memories. I returned home with all the necessary packing items and began my "duty" as instructed. By that time, I was feeling angry at Papa san for making me do all the packing alone. I wondered if he knew how hard it was for me to do it, and especially, how emotionally difficult it was. I fought back tears but wanted to obey him. I opened Mom and Dad's shared closet and Mom's separate closet in the TV room, and methodically removed one article of clothing at a time, folding blouses, shirts, dresses, slacks, sweaters, jackets, and coats, ever so neatly to preserve the fond memories I wanted to keep of my mother. All of her clothing was so tiny, like size 0 or even smaller. She would often purchase children-sized clothes because they fit her better. Most of her life she weighed less than 100 pounds. Near her death, she only weighed 75 pounds and had become like a child, small and fragile.

More than half the day passed by the time I finished sorting and boxing all of my Mom's clothes. I sorted through all of her accessories, shoes, jewelry, scarves, purses, make-up, hair products, and knick-knacks she had collected. Touching Mom's things made me appreciate how beautiful she was. She dressed fashionably and always looked classy. No wonder she was so popular. As the day progressed, I grew tired from the work and realized how I had managed to keep my emotions in check the entire time. As I surveyed my day's work, I saw stacks of boxes neatly labeled and staged and ready for transport to the local Veterans' drop-off station, where my mother had specifically said she wanted all her things to be donated. I finished what I set out to do that morning and by the end of the day my body ached. I let my guard down and let my emotions surface. I didn't want to accept the fact that Mom was really gone and that I'd never get to see her again. It was painful to think of her in that way and the sad thoughts weighed heavy on me.

At that exact moment Papa san walked into the room and asked, "Hey, wanna go eat Mexican food and have a margarita?" The entire day's burden and all of my emotions got the best of me. My "little girl" within surfaced again and I could no longer hold back my tears. I had worked so hard to do what Daddy had asked of me and I hoped he would come and rescue me at some-point. He knew exactly how to make me feel better. Sobbing uncontrollably, I hugged him hard and answered, "Y-E-S!"

Gravel

By Sandy Nakamura

There are special moments and memories in life that stay with you forever. Now, at sixty-four years old, I still have a visceral response to the sound of footsteps on gravel. I flashback to the young and tender age of being three or four years old, holding my Grandmother's hand, walking across a gravel path to the family's barn. It's almost dusk, my favorite time of the day, still hot outside from the day's 105-degree heat wave. The sun behind the barn still glows yellow and orange, not quite ready to set for the night. Grandma talks to me in Japanese and I don't understand what she is saying, but I feel loved and safe with her, holding hands. And the sound of our footsteps walking across the gravel pathway makes a soft, gentle rhythm to our pace. I listen to the sounds of the gravel beneath our feet almost more than Grandma's words because I find the sound soothing. It helps me feel present, in the moment with Grandma and the day, as it begins its end.

Sandy Nakamura has lived in Noe Valley for twenty-two years. She retired from UCSF and loves all animals, gardening hiking, reading, writing, and adventures. Life goal: To give back to my community.

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District 8 Community Liaison for Crime Prevention . . . . . Dave.Burke@sfgov.org
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—*Congresswoman Jackie Speier (1950–)*

RISING VOICES

fiction, poetry, essays, nonfiction • the noe valley voice

Table Seven

By Bill Yard

Photo by Jack Tipple

To the east, the land burned. Smoke drifted up and to the east. Haze like drunk God's orange breath oozed through the sky. Here, where he was—by the sea, the west—there was no smoke. No God.

The sacristan stood with his back to the sea, the tide to his hips, cool waves breaking over his back, the water separating, the force of the waves exhaling through him like fractals of incense escaping a priest's thurible. Then the sea retreated and the undertow sucked at his legs, petitioning his surrender. Again and again the sea breathed through him. He stood for now, arrogant, briefly immortal in his distraction, this most quaint human delusion.

Later again in his room behind the coast side café where he mopped floors, stacked dishes. One day he showed up, offered to clean in exchange for a meal—any meal, whatever the tourists refused to eat. Good food, fresh melon and tomatoes and avocados, and steamed chicken in rice. But abandoned when the tourists or surfers or lifeguards sought alternatives. After a few days he moved into the back room where he stayed for free, cleaning, standing guard, eating that day's leftovers. They forgot to ask him his name and by then it was too late.

He would wait until all the others had left and then scoop out a giant steaming bowl, the blinds lowered so that no one would see him. He ate. The church was lit by candles only. They let him stay in the café because he and only he did not notice the ghosts that were older than the café itself. For him the ghosts were at most mere rats scratching across the café's roof in the night, whiskers against the old drummer's snare—not worthy of discernment or categorical assignment.

Sometimes Consuela the waitress would linger with her clean empty coffee can to perhaps request some chicken and rice to take home to her boys which of course he was eager to provide. He only asked that she would greet her children and tell them from him that they should be good boys and study hard in school. And she would smile. He would smile back and think of how he had not been a good boy nor, later, a good man. And now like his name that they forgot to ask it was too late.

◘

When in spring the ice plant bloomed purple and yellow along the high dunes above the beach he would cut a few blossoms and place them into extra water glasses on the café's half dozen tables. He imagined that the customers liked the flowers and the owner didn't seem to mind. Flowers swayed like candles in the relentless Pacific wind that bent trees and men. Ice plant grows in sand when nothing much else will; he kept this knowledge to himself, like a faded photo of a long-dead lover. He had once wanted to live in the mountains but now the fire scared him.

This room, his private space. A hard camp cot, two lamps, an old wood desk someone had dumped by the road he had dragged back, a scratchy radio. On it he could get baseball games, or jazz out of LA. A musty old chair. A shelf sagging under books, notebooks, papers in disarray. Two boxes of clothes. And the beautiful window, open now as almost always—ancient wood too decrepit to adequately close, as if the window conspired with that great dome of creation to deny him an undeserved peace but provided an earned edification, allowing salt air or fog or sometimes rain when he was lucky. Paint curling just enough to give habitat to bugs.

No mirror. No clock. No photos. No future nor past. Only the present life that bleeds when cut.

Before, he had a collection of objects, and longing. Now he had more than all of that—all in this room. He stared at the blank page of the notebook open on the desk in front of him. He had nothing. He needed nothing. He had everything.

The skies cursed and belched like a drunken lesser deity and the clouds vomited, the rain came down. What a sweet smell, cusp of the endless sea, wet with spent plants, moist clinging earth.

◘

In the morning before their keys turned in the lock and the others let themselves in, the sacristan built a pot of coffee and poured a cup. Shrine: taste of hot black blood. The blood of Jesus is coffee. Far in the distance the first surfers paddled into the breakers and beyond. Pelicans in formation patrolled above them. Jesus—his brother, his foolish younger brother!—on a cross instead of a surfboard, above the door. The sacristan climbed up on a chair and carefully dusted the Son of God. A sharp cry tore the silence: two gulls on the deck fought over a French fry, like centurions quarreling over Jesus' underwear, hyenas euthanatizing a lame wildebeest. I tried to warn Jesus but he wouldn't listen. You want to tear out the liver because it is the most nutritious, you want to gulp it down in great steaming face fulls.

Customers facing each other, faceless. Eating a perfunctory eucharist. Clutching their phones. He swept up around their feet, careful not to touch. Murmur of conversations amidst unknown hungry customers. Perhaps they will leave a tip. Silence would not return until everyone except him had left for the night, he extinguished the lights and returned to his room, the window as Greek chorus mimicked the oncoming storm, the desultory wind.

Tonight he would take his steaming bowl back to his room. He'd let the radio sleep and instead sit and listen to the breaking waves, static singing from the endless black sea.

◘

Once he had thought of writing down these and other thoughts until he learned that there was nothing new to write. His thoughts were not his own, merely ideas passing through, heretofore cobbled together, and after escaping his tentative grasp they were destined for nowhere. Someone handed him a crystal, the most beautiful artifact: he dropped it and it shattered. The memory a scab to be picked at until the itching stopped.

◘

Please, he tells the world, you owe me nothing. But I am not writing about me. I am writing about what is gone. What could have been. I work in this coast side restaurant mopping up after tourists and surfers and I have enough to survive.

◘

The sacristan had finished mopping his floors and stacking his dishes. He returned to his room, lay down on his hard cot, pulled the thin blanket up to his chin. The scratchy brown blanket. The window danced in the draft. He thought again, as he did almost every night, of all of them, all of them gone, gone without a trace other than a dull spark of memory. Those who remained had long since forgotten him; he no longer existed in their minds only we exist in others' minds and then we do not exist. No one survives this existence; it is a brief scent in the wind and absurd! As it should be! How selfish and warm and wonderful to lie on this hard cold cot—utterly alone. He rolled over onto his side like a fetus and hugged the worn stained pillow. Finally he was outside of time. Time enough for everything and nothing more. The floor in the café beneath table seven needed sweeping—salt had spilled. Desperate, delicious salt.

Bill Yard sent the following from a Fourth World internet café (using a fake ID and a borrowed debit card):

I need to focus more. Often, my socks don't match. I smack my lips and sometimes touch myself inappropriately when the judge is sentencing me. But I get distracted so easily! Crows in the alley fighting over a discarded empanada, zealots urging me to repent, a young boy crying because he wet his pants. I can relate. To the crows.

Look, I'm closing in on 71 years of age. It's deep in the fourth quarter. I'm down by 10 and don't have much time to turn things around, and my best running back just pulled a hammy.

I'm sorry: what was the question?

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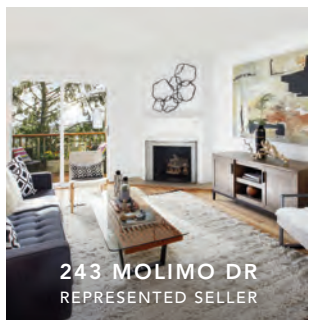

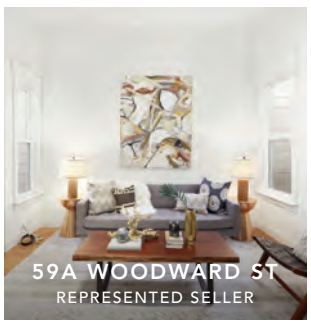

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Community Outreach Public Notice

January 2022

The Redistricting Task Force has begun!

Every ten years, the district boundaries of San Francisco's Supervisorial districts are redrawn to ensure that each district maintains equal numbers of residents. Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the redistricting process.
The Task Force needs your input!

Tell the Task Force where to draw the San Francisco Supervisorial District lines!

As they convene, they will look to ***YOU*** and collect your opinions, ideas, and concerns around your District lines and the impacts to our communities.

REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- ***First Monday of Every Month at 6:00 p.m.***
- ***Third Wednesday of Every Month at 6:00 p.m.***

Please watch the website Special Meetings.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

- Attend meetings Please see the website for specific directions. https://sf.gov/public-body/2020-census-redistricting-task-force
- Submit comments by emailing rdtf@sfgov.org or calling (415) 554-4445
- Join the email list to receive updates issued by the Redistricting Task Force. To sign up, go to sfelections.org/rdtf
- Follow the Redistricting Task Force on Facebook and Twitter: @RedistrictSF

The City and County of San Francisco encourage public outreach. Articles are translated into several languages to provide better public access. The newspaper makes every effort to translate the articles of general interest correctly. No liability is assumed by the City and County of San Francisco or the newspapers for errors and omissions.

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Two Poems

By Grace D'Anca

Cross Hairs of Truth and Ego; after Q R Hand

No drifters leave here alive
not even floaters or
weak willed wannabees
not in one-way window buses
on schussing skateboards
standing bird-legged on corners
hookers used to own
hypnotized by screens, or screeding on Instagram
about new beers and smelly cheeses
trampling the feast that brought them
leaving left over lattes and quiche crumbs
no beggar would touch.
I saw these floaters with my eyes
wide open in the middle of the day.
I got scared so I went to the Kaiser neurologist
without an appointment. She said
Don't worry. The pendulum swings
but it leaves scars. So I split
and couldn't find my car for days.
But I was relieved. I knew
no drifters could leave there
alive when they meet the crosshairs of truth
and ego. I went back home to deal
with the funky girls fricking and fracking
in a moldy mirror. They were
heavy into cube and slice
only dealt the cards to each other
aimed the poison darts straight for the heart.
They had no mercy with the pinking shears.
Later I heard they *cube and sliced* each other
had to live on separate floors
the one who laughed into her armpit
had no back windows.
they moved to Oakland
when the presidents changed chairs
had a house apiece
and didn't speak anymore.
I had the last snort
and it was sweet. This is
serious nonsense.
If they can inhabit the same cube
two minds can think alike
it's not schizophrenic.
it's just hard to keep the wheel straight
after the army of none left
only folding chairs
and locked up the mantra.

Birthday Boy

I never want to give you
toy guns. Shiny gray plastic
intoxicating with brilliant red
blue and orange moving parts
more mesmerizing than candy.
Those playthings

you so love. Your dad
has real guns locked
in the closet behind
the warm coats. One day

he will take care
to teach you how to use them
with great care. I fear

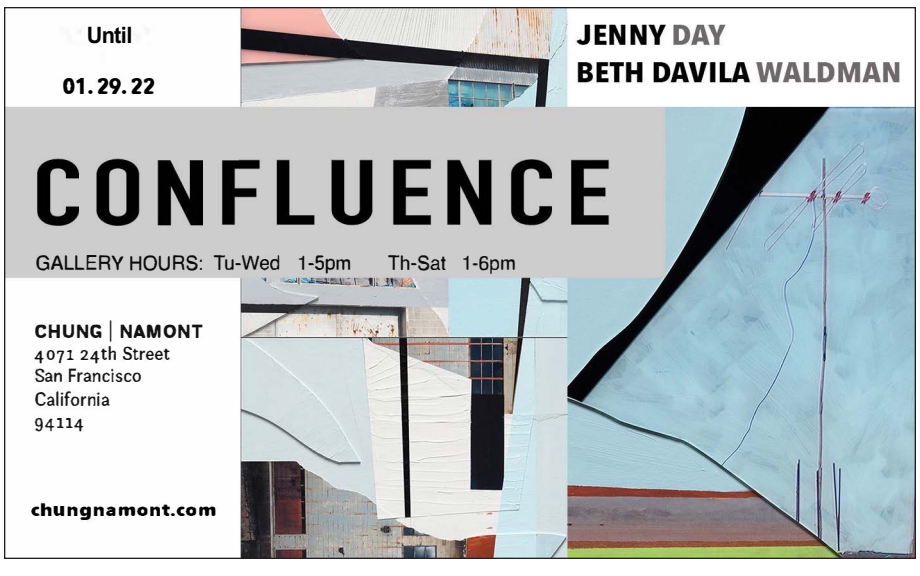
some evening
after I swing the corroded
groaning metal gate
across my feeble back door
against the night
some might lope
over the two-story fence
into the prickly bushes
hobble over stones
up the shimmying steps
always illuminated
under christmas lights
to surprise me

alone in the dark
with only screams and prayers
for protection. Though

I will never give you
toy guns, I watch your smile
crack your face open
as you rip the crispy paper
and whispering tissue. You

fling a hug around my waist
and say you must be sad
that grandpa's cancer
came back. And I
dissolve in the wonder
and kindness of your
six year-old heart.

Minnesotan Grace D'Anca came to S.F. in 1967 in pursuit of the arts. Performing with Bay Area theater and dance groups in funky church basements, mental health facilities and youth lock-ups, she got interested in audiences and became a creative arts therapist. Retired, she has found her way back to making arts for her own sake.



Voice Readers

Ah Cabo! In San Jose Del Cabo, our incognito Noe Vallean puruses her hometown tabloid. Rumor has it that she's know to frequent the Valley Tavern when back in the neighborhood. Our lips are sealed.

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(vē´vr') ***v.*** [Fr.] to live; to experience.

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– Valentin B.

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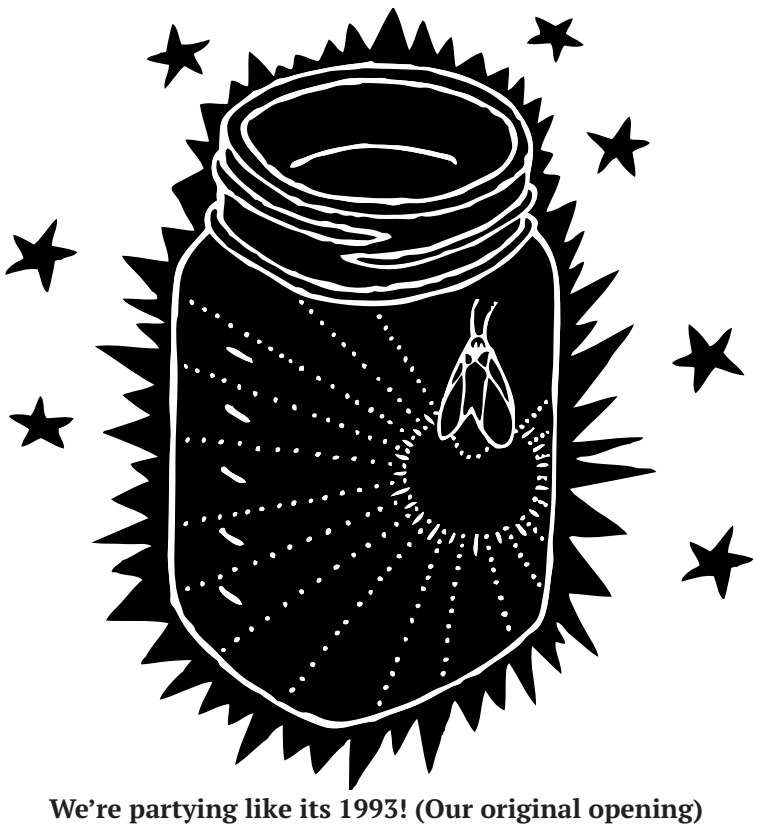

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WINTER BACKYARD BIRDING IN SAN FRANCISCO

By LisaRuth Elliott

The length of time it takes to drink my cup of coffee. That's the time I am giving myself to spend with the birds these winter mornings. I find I see more birds when I get up earlier. But I'm trying not to be greedy about my backyard birding. It's a time away from my phone, before I check any work emails, and sometimes I'm still wearing my pajamas. Even if I only see the usual suspects, my perception and sense of the world around me expands in this short time sitting outside.

The last two weeks, I've had what I consider an instant win the moment I step out into the garden, binoculars around my neck and mug of hot liquid joy in hand, and hear high pitched whistling above. We've had a flock of migrating Cedar Waxwings hanging out daily in the walnut tree next door. This tree is a revolving habitat for the neighborhood birds, and the various species generally co-exist in the branches of its vast crown. Come November, the tree has lost most of its leaves and any bird-shaped blob is visible in the vast network of perches it offers. Last year, on winter solstice, I euphorically counted over 60 Cedar Waxwings. This year, some days I've seen upwards of three dozen of them at once. These creatures seem almost airbrushed, their grey backs and cream bellies so smooth, so perfect. They are also very chill birds. Not so with all the backyard visitors. Some flit and dart around too quickly to lift the binoculars and focus in on them. But the Cedar Waxwings sit so still, it's almost regal. The lack of movement allows me to catch good long visuals of the dots of red at the tip of their wings—like red fingernails—and the bright yellow at the bottom edge of their tail feathers.

Cedar Waxwing (Bombycilla cedrorum), 2014 paper collage by LisaRuth Elliott.

And their head feathers point out backwards almost as extremely as their beak, accentuated by horizontal white and black eyebrows. It's a delight to just gaze at these dreamy non-dimorphic guys and gals.

After a few days, I get to see more than just gorgeous profiles. Through my binoculars, I witness the quintessential Cedar Waxwing portrait—holding a bright red berry in its beak. I follow some of them to the top of our Toyon tree, which at the apex still has some ripe berries. This is the stuff of bird photography, and even without a fancy camera I get the view. Days later, I follow their mini silver Hindenburg flying forms on the trajectory to a neighboring bush, where the flock's preferred red berries come from. They bring them back, one per beak, and down the gullet they go. Mostly this happens in one graceful toss of the head, but one day I see that the small stem of one berry keeps getting caught on one of the Cedar Waxwing's beak, and it is like a small juggling act to try to get the angle of the berry right to consume it. I think it might drop it, but of course, I needn't worry. They are naturals at this. Checking out the flock one morning, I think one bird has a red berry in its beak. Sitting slightly behind a branch, it takes a while to realize the bird's beak is closed and I am seeing some sort of deformation or infected beak. When you spend extended time observing birds, it's not always romantic.

This week the Cedar Waxwings have moved on, and I'm left with the usual suspects: the Anna's Hummingbird, American Crows, California Scrub-Jays, House Finches, and American Robins. When no other more "interesting" bird shows up, I try to get to know these species a bit better. I look for the differences between female and male Robins, try to memorize eye markings and catch them in the act of singing so I can recognize that song later without the visual. I delight in seeing the hummingbird stretch its tongue out and puff up in the colder morning air. I memorize which branches it prefers on the variety of trees between three backyards, so I know where to look when I hear it calling each day. Despite the expected scene, I've learned more, created a deeper relationship—even if just one-sided. And I delight when others appear—in the explosion of whiteboard marker sounds of the Bushtit crew on one side of the garden, or when the Chestnut-backed Chickadee checks out the nest box and gives a shrill chick-a-dee-dee.

LisaRuth Elliott is inspired by place. The stories and landscape of San Francisco, of Yelamu and its creatures, inform her life and work. She is an avid birder, writer and editor, visual artist, community historian, urban farmer, and lecturer at Bay Area universities.

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Art at Your Feet. A legacy of the previous long-time tenant at 3848 24th Street is this complex stained glass work done by Dan Gamaldi in 2010. Gamaldi operated his shop Cradle of the Sun there for many decades.
Photo by Jack Tipple

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RISING VOICES

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Do You Wash Your Hair Often?

By Julie Lekach House

I enjoy reading the obituaries, and it's not because I'm of a certain age (which I am). Sometimes the tiny stories embedded in these chronicles of a life speak to me and stick with me. Recently, I read the obit of the 90-year old founder of the world's largest fast food chain, Subway.

The restaurant chain changed its name in 1968 from Pete's Submarines to Subway. Why? Listeners to the company's radio ads heard Pizza Marines and not Pete's Submarines. Ah, mishearing—and the things one learns reading the obits.

This obit reminded me of one of my own tiny stories. Back in 1973, my friend Cathy and I volunteered regularly at the regional theater in downtown Buffalo called Studio Arena. We saw almost every play performed, and more than a few were well worth the price of admission—our time.

My favorite was That Championship Season with Brian Dennehy. We knew we were watching something special as we sat transfixed in the back rows of the theater in the round. That play went on to Broadway fame, winning a Tony award for best play of 1973 and a Pulitzer.

One Sunday afternoon, Cathy and I were ushering for a matinee performance. We had arrived early and were wandering the lobby before the theater needed us. An acquaintance we knew from our youth group unexpectedly approached us. Cathy and I gave each other a sideways glance.

Mike was what we called a nerd or a dork. He was always too anxious to talk to us. He had a 5 o'clock shadow no matter the time of day. He seemed greasy. Besides all that, he actually seemed like a nice guy and we liked chatting with him when no one else we considered cool could see.

Photo by Jack Tipple

Mike appeared to have soft spot for Cathy. But our light conversation took a weird turn when Mike asked us: Do you wash your hair often? Cathy and I looked at each other not knowing how to respond. Cathy piped up and replied: Every other day at least. I added, sometimes in winter only once a week.

Wow, Mike said, for me it's only once a month.

Cathy and I were totally grossed out. Ewww!! No wonder he was so oily.

Cathy, always the straight shooter, said: You have a lot of chutzpah asking that question!

Really? Mike responded incredulously. Maybe it's because I do backstage work, and you guys are front-of-house ushering? I didn't think it was a secret how much we get to work here.

Ahh! Ohhh! We kept our laughter to ourselves. Was it cruel to Mike to not admit our mishearing? Maybe. We were 16 or 17 years old. I'm not sure that's a good excuse, but that's what we did.

After ushering, we had a big belly laugh about it. From then on, we could always break any tension by asking each other: Do you wash your hair often? The answer was always a very long period of time, and led to some serious head shaking and chuckling.

Lessons learned: Buffalo is not the total cultural backwater everyone outside Buffalo assumes, and it's amazing what you hear if you listen. Even more amazing, and a bit disheartening, is what you might hear if you listen to the tape in your head, instead of the context of the words being spoken.

Do you wash your hair often? Maybe only after you eat at Pizza Marines.

Julie Lekach House has lived in Upper Noe Valley since 1990. She and her husband raised two daughters here. They ran a successful software business from their home before WFH was a thing. Currently, Julie is retired and enjoys folk and line dancing, t'ai chi, Duolingo Yiddish and writing for her memoir class.

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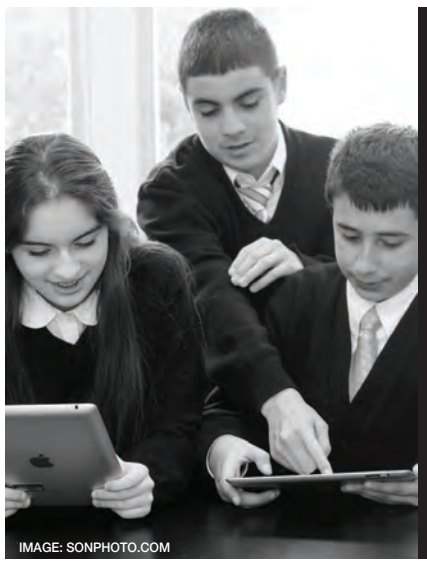

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Juan Felipe Herrera: Every Day We Get More Illegal

By Tim Simmers

Every Day We Get More Illegal by Juan Felipe Herrera, City Lights Publishers, San Francisco, 2020, $14.68 paperback.

A child of immigrant farmworkers who picked crops in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, Juan Felipe Herrera has a good feel for life as a migrant worker.

He moved around a lot, sometimes living in trailers and tents with his mother and father as they followed the harvest, so it's no surprise his latest collection of poems, *Every Day We Get More Illegal,* has the clear ring of truth.

He wrote the poems like a letter to America, and it wasn't an easy letter for him to write because he speaks directly about immigration, poverty, and the exploitation of workers in tumultuous times. He's not holding back.

Born in 1948 in Fowler, just south of Fresno, Herrera has trod a long road from the fields to becoming poet laureate of the United States (2015–2017). After two years of traveling through towns across America and listening to the aches and pains of the people he met, he drew a stark picture of this country.

The poems portray the struggle, suffering, and pain of people pushed to the edge and stung by the separation and divisiveness of the borderline during Donald Trump's long presidential campaign and early months in the White House.

"He was a sponge for all this weight, and psychic energy and fear in the community going from town to town, and he honored those experiences," said Fresno poet Anthony Cody, who calls Herrera a mentor.

Cody wasn't surprised that Herrera shifted to a more serious tone in his latest poems, "because he's a listener, attuned to those around him."

While pulling no punches in the book, Herrera also includes the spirit of peace, hope, humanity, and the possibilities of unity and community, common themes in his work.

"I wrote in a direct manner, talking to the reader, to America, to the consciousness that wiggles in between us," said Herrera, who lives in Fresno and is U.S. poet laureate emeritus at Fresno State. "I wanted to relate to people's concerns in these times."

In his powerful poem "You Just Don't Talk About It," Herrera taps anger and emotion:

You prefer the holiday merchandise the national vacuum
You just don't care about the pushed out the stopped out
The forced out the starved out the fenced out the shot down
The cut back the asphalted out on the other side of the track
The suicided the hanged w/ a bedsheet
Of nothing in the cell of nothing

An ardent activist for immigrants and indigenous communities, Herrera started hearing poetry at an early age from his mother, Lucha Quintana Herrera. She went only to the third grade in school in El Paso, Tex., but she recited poems to him she memorized from school.

"She was always reciting poems to me since I was a child," said the quick-witted and sage-like poet. "You could say she was training me to be a poet."

First-grade student Juan Felipe Herrera at Central Elementary in Escondido. His mom Lucha (right top photo); grandmother Juana, aunt Lela, and his mom at a border station (right center photo); and great-grandmother Vicentita (right bottom photo *Photos courtesy Juan Felipe Herrera*

Mama Lucha also played guitar and sang old narrative-style Mexican corridos to him. Herrera remembers the stories from those ballads and sometimes sang them with his mother.

In his youth, she encouraged him to "get a guitar—you'll always have a companion." Before long, he was playing the folk songs of Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, and was crazy about Joan Baez's voice.

Herrera was the only child of his father's "second family," as he puts it. His father, Felipe Emilio Herrera, worked long hours, and Juan learned a lot about play and imagination and drawing cartoons.

He likes to play with words like a mad scientist who stirs chemicals to see what happens. "I get inspired and excited putting words together in one sentence that doesn't seem to go together," he wrote to a 12-year-old boy who had written to him asking why he mixed words "like space and vegetables."

Herrera is a big advocate of children and ordinary people writing poetry and reading to one another.

Though he likes being playful, his recent collection of poems touches more on people crossing borders, whether they're documented or undocumented, and about justice and culture. In "Touch the Earth (once again)," he pays respect to workers—the washer woman and the laundry workers, the grape and artichoke workers, the cucumber workers and many more. In the end, he urges readers:

Notice: where they cash their tiny & wrinkled checks and pay stubs;
Stand in that small-town desert sundries store, then walk out they do
& stall for a moment they do underneath this colossal tree
With its shedding solace for a second or two
Notice: how they touch the earth—for you

"I feel like I never got to this style—direct, right on the plate," Herrera said.

In elementary school outside of Escondido, Herrera never talked in class and sat in the back row. He shut down speaking, after a teacher took him over her knee and spanked him for being late in the first grade. He just sat back and observed until the third grade, when a friendly and kind part-time teacher, Lelya Sampson, asked him to come up in front of the class. She knew he liked music and asked him to sing a song. He sang "Three Blind Mice."

"You have a beautiful voice," Sampson said for all the class to hear. Herrera walked back to his desk and tried to "unlock that phrase." It haunted him at first, but eventually it freed him. He later sang "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" at a school assembly.

"She gave me the magic keys," Herrera said about his teacher. "Those five words changed my life." They allowed him to give the magic keys to his own students, who now see him as their mentor, a local treasure, and a national poetry icon living among them.

"Dozens of people speak to him as their mentor. He's been there for people," said Cody, author of a collection of poems called *Borderland Apocrypha*.

When Herrera was U.S. poet laureate, he invited Sampson when she was 95 to the Library of Congress inauguration. He told the story of her asking him to sing and what it meant to him, and then he introduced her to the audience. She received a rousing ovation.

Tim Hernandez, a creative writing professor at the University of Texas–El Paso and a longtime Herrera friend, sees the latest book as an extension of where "Juan Felipe has always been.

"It's very vast and expansive," said Hernandez, who resided in Fresno for years and wrote the book *All They Will Call You*, based on Woody Guthrie's lyrics in the song "Deportees."

"He takes small acts of daily life into a bigger picture of the universe, and he condenses complex ideas into the least amount of words," Hernandez said.

Herrera's newest book, released before Joe Biden's election, was published by City Lights Books in San Francisco, founded by the late poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Ferlinghetti was another of Herrera's early influences.

The provocative title, *Every Day We Get More Illegal*, just came to him one day.

"There was always a new law or executive order," Herrera said. Changes in the citizenship exams, surprise new stops at the southern Mexico border, more detention centers, and separating families. "There's always more requirements and they pile up," he said.

He remembers a young migrant boy he met in Jackson, Wyo., who told him, "I'm here, but I still feel like I'm in Mexico," Herrera said. "There are pain and suffering, and there's overcoming and flourishing." He embraces the possibilities of overcoming. "We're human beings, we can fall apart, but it's all right. We can get up again," he said.

Herrera has written more than a dozen collections of poetry, including *Notes on the Assemblage, Senegal Taxi, 187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border: Undocuments 1971–2007,* and *Half of the World in Light: New and Selected Poems,* emphasizing his Chicano identity.

The nation's first Latino poet laureate also has written books of prose for children, including *Lejos/Far, Jabberwalking*, and *Upside Down Boy*.

He's lived in many parts of California, such as San Diego, Riverside, and San Francisco, where he went to elementary school for a while in his beloved Mission District. He was California's poet laureate from 2012 to 2014.

In a recent playful moment, Herrera claimed the fruits and vegetables had their stories about farmworkers—as if they could hear the dialogue while the pickers picked. He believes he has those stories in him because his mother worked in the fields when she was pregnant with him.

Tim Simmers is a freelance writer, teacher, and longtime Bay Area journalist, who moved to Fresno a couple of years ago after a landlord tripled his rent. During the 2010s he was a frequent contributor to the Noe Valley Voice. His review of Every Day We Get More Illegal was first printed in the Community Alliance, a progressive monthly newspaper in Fresno. Contact him at TSimmers11@gmail.com

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North on Church

By Jeff Kaliss

Time might seem as straight as streets
but memory winds through it.

Let's start where Church Street T's, at 30th,
highest of the Street numbers.
But don't forget, there's one more block
beyond the T, on up a hill,
and that's where C and I lived.
I'd come down to catch the J
at Church and 30th, in old days,
when I was young
and still a bachelor.
I had a job downtown to get to,
I wasn't yet a full-time writer,
before the J line and I got extended.

Now that I'm a working writer
I'll walk these blocks,
back and forth across those years,
recalling not all the proper nouns.
I do recall the ladies.
I called them by their givens,
but I'll recall each with a letter here.

At this corner stood a breakfast place,
old-fashioned in its smells and in its prices.
I took L here, when we lived just a few doors down,
in a two-story, pre-marital rental.

A decade sooner, C and I had done our laundry here,
mid-block.
Two decades later, I began to buy my entrees there,
bringing in my kids to meet the friendly butchers
and the even friendlier jazz drummer,
who lived close by and chuckled at their growing.
Across the street, a bakery
with almond croissants any day
and, for St. Patrick's, Irish soda bread
for St. Paul's Irish congregates.

C turned Catholic in this church, after we broke up
She got baptized and fond of the handsome priest.

A few blocks to the west,
L and I brought baby N back from her birthing
and later got her walking and talking.
All my girlfriends visited this girl,
C and E and S, but not together.
They'd all been at the Ministry for our wedding, though.

(Walking's now a challenge for N's dad.
The longer you live, the longer you've walked,
but your legs don't grow any longer.)

C, half-German, loved to go for sauerkraut and braten
to the restaurant that sprawled around this corner.
Over there a store owned by friendly Arabs
got vandalized, soon after 9/11.
Mostly Noe Valley has been peaceful, accepting,
and admirably eclectic.
(So have I, I hope.)

The eatery on that corner
was an early case of 'cute',
a harbinger of hipsters,
rising prices, trendy tastes.
Before they got there, up the street,
a Middle Eastern restaurant,
homey and affordable,
was a good place to take E,
she was from that background.

The bar here had patches on the walls
which matched the neo-hippyness
of many who came here,
including B, C and my favorite flat-mate,
a lovely blonde who sang here, with guitar,
for free beer, fostering fantasies of free love.
In between her songs, the jukebox
played the Doobies, "Takin' It to the Streets".
"Fairly soon, the time will tell."
It told R, the brother of my girlfriend S,
how times had changed, five years later,
when I took him here
and something sparked a bar fight.
(Now time is telling me
how steep it seems,
climbing up to 24th Street
and the heart of Noe Valley.)

Here was my best-loved bar & grill
which went through name and owner changes
while I went through the last servings
of serial monogamy.
Married for a second, final time,
I sat down here for a family lunch
with my wife and one-week baby N,
apple of our eye and that of T, the wise old barkeep.
Two decades later, N, on break from school,
would work here for T's grandson,
long after T had left us with our memories
of him and all we've loved
along this line.

I'll get back on the J and toast them now.

— Jeff Kaliss 12/15/21

Starting with the *Voice* 31 years ago, Jeff Kaliss has been an internationally-and-web-published journalist. He also holds an MFA in Creative Writing and writes and reads poetry locally and online globally.

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Turning the Page

Start the new year with a good book. May we suggest a title from the list that Adult Services Librarian Francisco Cardona and Children's Librarian Catherine Starr have offered Voice readers this month? There's the bestseller on the origins and demise of Tulsa's "Black Wall Street," a treatise on the workings of the body's immune system, and a children's book about three monsters vying to be *The Ugliest Monster in the World.*

Whatever your picks, you can place them on hold at sfpl.org, the San Francisco Public Library's website, and arrange for pickup at Noe Valley or other branches around the city. If you need assistance, call the Noe Valley Branch directly at 415-355-5707 or email info@sfpl.org. Better yet, take a walk to the Noe Valley Library, at 451 Jersey St. (between Castro and Diamond streets). Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Remember to bring your mask. The City and County of San Francisco has mandated that *library visitors and staff must wear face coverings*, regardless of vaccination status.

ADULT FICTION

Reckless Girls by Rachel Hawkins is a suspenseful gothic mystery set on an isolated Pacific island.

A Baton Rouge psychologist revisits the murders that her father confessed to, in ***A Flicker in the Dark*** by Stacy Willingham.

In ***The Island of Missing Trees*** by Elif Shafak, a girl discovers secrets of her family in Greece.

In Joshua Ferris' ***A Calling for Charlie Barnes***, a man attempts to understand the many lives of his father.

Cloud Cuckoo Land by Anthony Doerr links stories from 15th-century Constantinople, a small town in present-day Idaho, and an interstellar spaceship in the future.

ADULT eBOOK FICTION

A young half-Indian girl watches horror movies to cope with the horror of her own life, in ***My Heart Is a Chainsaw*** by Stephen Graham Jones.

In ***She Who Became the Sun*** by Shelley Parker-Chan, a girl takes on her dead brother's identity as a monk to fight Mongol rule in 1345 China.

ADULT NONFICITON

The Ground Breaking by Scott Ellsworth describes the long-suppressed story of the destruction of Tulsa's "Black Wall Street."

In No Cure for Being Human (and Other Truths I Need to Hear), author Kate Bowler discusses cancer and ways to move forward.

Daniel Barban Levin's memoir, ***Slonim Woods 9***, recounts his years in a cult that started on the Sarah Lawrence College campus.

In ***The Raging 202***0, Alec Ross considers the balance of power among government, commerce, and everyday citizens during recent global changes.

Immune by Philipp Dettmer explains and illustrates the complex working of the human body's immune system.

ADULT eBOOK NONFICITON

Sanjay Gupta describes the current epidemic in ***World War C: Lessons From the Covid-19 Pandemic and How to Prepare for the Next One.***

Seeing Ghosts, a memoir by Kat Chow, follows three generations of a Chinese American family.

ADULT DVDs

The 2020 documentary ***The Bee Gees: How Can You Mend a Broken Heart*** covers the history of the group, with archival interviews and performances.

The Doctor and Jamie are transported to 1866 in the 2021 animated film ***Doctor Who: Evil of the Daleks.***

The Transylvanian vampire Count plots against Victorian London in the 2020 Netflix reimagining of ***Dracula***.

Jessica Chastain stars as the controversial televangelist in the 2021 bio-drama ***The Eyes of Tammy Faye***.

Based on a true story, ***Flag Day***, directed by Sean Penn, is about a father who leads a double life to provide for his daughter.

CHILDREN'S FICTION

Three monsters try to decide who's the ugliest in ***The Ugliest Monster in the World***, written by Luis Amavisca and illustrated by Erica Salcedo. Ages 3 to 5.

A girl deals with peer pressure in ***I Can Help***, written by Reem Faruqi, illustrated by Mikela Prevost. Ages 4 to 8.

Lisa Wilke Pope offers a creative retelling of the tale of the three little pigs, in ***How the Big Bad Wolf Got His Comeuppance***, illustrated with etchings by Arthur Geisert. Ages 4 to 8.

The Adventures of Sophie Mouse: The Hidden Cottage is the 18th in the popular series written by Poppy Green and illustrated by Jennifer A. Bell. Ages 6 to 9.

Josh Allen offers nightmare scenarios in ***Only If You Dare: 13 Stories of Darkness and Doom***, illustrated by Sarah J. Coleman. Ages 8 to 13.

Two sisters in medieval times escape from their murderous uncle in ***The Bear House*** by Meaghan McIsaac. Ages 10 to 14.

Other Boys is Damian Alexander's graphic memoir about his struggles with bullying in adolescence and his ultimate coming-out as gay. Ages 10 to 16.

CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION

Nature Did It First: Engineering Through Biomimicry, written by Karen Ansberry and illustrated by Jennifer DiRubbio, points out how nature inspires innovation. Ages 5 to 11.

Diversity in nature is celebrated in ***The Snail With the Right Heart: A True Story*** written by Maria Popova, illustrated by Ping Zhu. Ages 6 to 12.

Curious About Crocodiles, the seventh book in Owen Davey's "About Animals" series, focuses on the semiaquatic reptile's many variations. Ages 7 to 10.

Colleen Paeff describes how an engineer in 1858 took on the city's pollution problem, in ***The Great Stink: How Joseph Bazalgette Solved London's Poop Pollution Problem***; illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Ages 7 to 12.

This Book Is Feminist: An Intersectional Primer for Next-Gen Changemakers, written by Jamia Wilson and illustrated by Aurelia Durand, is a guide especially for ages 11 to 15.

Aimed at creating discussion among white kids, ***The Other Talk: Reckoning With Our White Privilege*** is a memoir and guide by Brendan Kiely with an intro by Jason Reynolds. Ages 12 to 18.

CHILDREN'S EBOOKS, FICTION & NONFICTION

Children point out silly questions they always get asked in ***A Kid Is a Kid Is a Kid***, written by Sara O'Leary and illustrated by Qin Leng. Ages 3 to 6.

Siblings think about moving beyond labels and act like their real selves in ***The Goody*** by Lauren Child. Ages 4 to 9.

Twelve young activists describe what they do to combat climate change in ***Old Enough to Save the Plane***t, written by Loll Kirby and illustrated by Adelina Lirius. Ages 6 to 12.

In ***The Boys in the Back Row*** by Mike Jung, two boys plan to sneak away to a comics convention. Ages 9 to 12.

A girl discovers long-buried family secrets in ***Escape to Witch City***, a fantasy adventure set in historical London by E. Latimer. Ages 9 to 14.

Julie Knutson maps out people's rights and responsibilities in ***Global Citizenship: Engage in the Politics of a Changing World***, illustrated by Traci Van Wagoner. Ages 12 to 15.

Annotations by Voice *bookworm Karol Barske*

BRANCH HOURS*

Noe Valley/Sally Brunn Branch Library*
451 Jersey St., 355-5707

Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30

Mission Branch Library*
300 Bartlett St., 355-2800
Closed for renovation

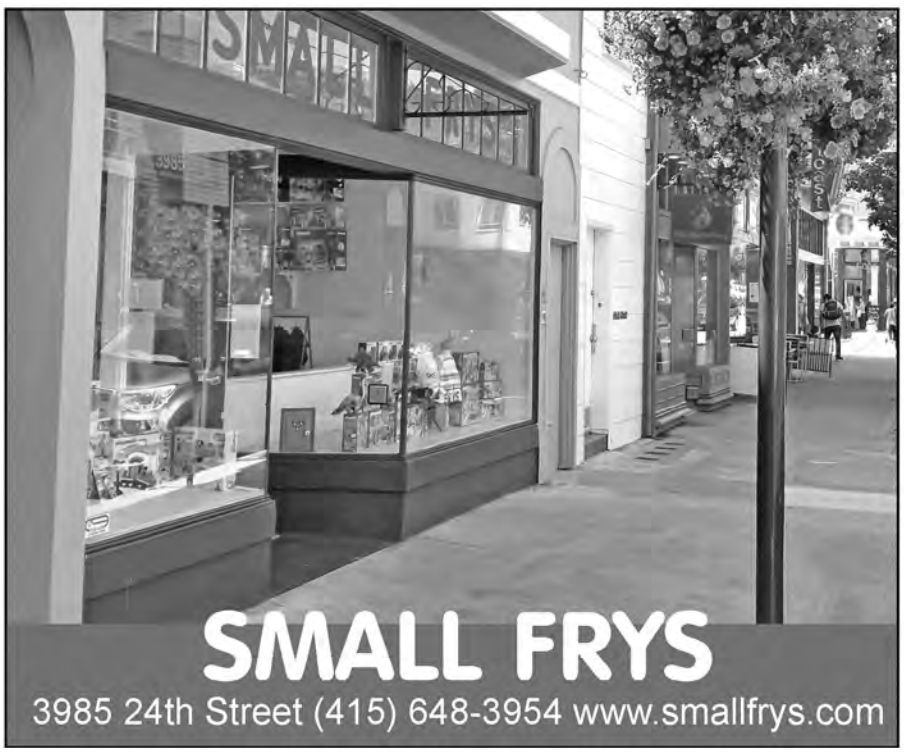
Glen Park Branch Library*
2825 Diamond St., 355-2858

Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30

Eureka Valley–Harvey Milk Branch Library*
1 José Sarria Ct. (3555 16th St.), 355-5616

Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30	10-5:30

*For updates, go to sfpl.org.



MORE GROUPS TO JOIN

Action SF, the National Movement in Your Neighborhood
Websites: http://www.action-sf.com/ or https://m.facebook.com/ActionSFactivism/ or http://resistrypac.org
Email: ActionSFsolidarity@gmail.com
Meetings: Usually first Sundays, 12:30-2 p.m. Virtual meeting. All welcome.

Al-Anon Noe Valley
Contact: 834-9940
Website: al-anonsf.org
Meetings: Wednesdays, 7:30-9 p.m.
St. Philip Church, 725 Diamond St. (park on Elizabeth Street side; enter on 24th Street)

Castro Community on Patrol
Website: castropatrol.org
Email: info@castropatrol.org

Castro Merchants
Contacts: Masood Samereie, President; Dave Karraker, 415-710-0245
Email: Dave@mx3fitness.com
Address: 584 Castro St. #333, SF, CA 94114
Meetings: Email info@CastroMerchants.com

Diamond Heights Community Association
Contact: Betsy Eddy, 867-5774
Address: P.O. Box 31529, SF, CA 94131
Website: www.dhcasf.org
Meetings: Second Thursday, 7 p.m. Call for location.

Dolores Heights Improvement Club
Email: info@doloresheights.org
Website: www.doloresheights.org
Meetings: Third Thursday of every second month. Bank of America, 18th and Castro.

Duncan Newburg Association (DNA)
Contacts: Deanna Mooney, 821-4045; Diane McCarney, 824-0303; or Sally Chew, 821-6235. Address: 560 Duncan St., SF, CA 94131. Meetings: Call for details.

Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association
Website: https://evna.org
Address: P.O. Box 14137, SF, CA 94114
Meetings: See website calendar. Castro Meeting Room, 501 Castro St., 7 p.m.

Fair Oaks Neighbors
Email: hello@fairoaksneighbors.org
Address: 200 Fair Oaks St., SF, CA 94110
The Fair Oaks Street Fair is traditionally held the day before Mother's Day.

Friends of Billy Goat Hill
Contact: Lisa and Mo Ghotbi, 821-0122
Website: www.billygoathill.net

Friends of Dolores Park Playground
Contact: Nancy Gonzalez Madynski, 828-5772
Email: friendsofdolorespark@gmail.com
Website: friendsofdolorespark.org

Friends of Glen Canyon Park
Contact: Jean Conner, 584-8576
Address: 140 Turquoise Way, SF, CA 94131
Plant restoration work parties, Wednesday mornings and third Saturday of the month.

Friends of Noe Courts Playground
Contact: Laura Norman
Email: lauranor@yahoo.com
Address: P.O. Box 460953, SF, CA 94146
Meetings: Email for dates and times.

Friends of Noe Valley (FNV)
Contact: Todd David, 401-0625
Email: info@friendsofnoevalley.com
Website: friendsofnoevalley.com
Meetings: Two or three annually.

Friends of Upper Noe Recreation Center
Contact: Chris Faust
Email: info@uppernoerecreationcenter.com
Website: uppernoerecreationcenter.com
Meetings: Email or check website.

Friends of Upper Noe Dog Owners Group (FUNDOG)
Contacts: Chris Faust, David Emanuel
Email: info@fundogsf.org
Website: www.fundogsf.org

Glen Park Association
Contact: info@glenparkassociation.org
Website: glenparkassociation.org
Address: P.O. Box 31292, SF, CA 94131

Juri Commoners
Contact: Dave Schweisguth, MI7-6290
Email: dave@schweisguth.org
Website: meetup.com/Juri-Commoners
Meetings: Most last Saturdays, 9-noon.

Liberty Hill Neighborhood Association
Contact: Dr. Lisa Fromer, president
Email: efromer3@gmail.com
Meetings: Quarterly. Email for details.

Noe Neighborhood Council
Contact: Ozzie Rohm or Matt McCabe, Co-founders
Email: info@noeneighborhoodcouncil.com
Website: noeneighborhoodcouncil.com
Meetings: Quarterly at Sally Brunn Library, 451 Jersey St., with date publicized on website and Nextdoor.com.

Noe Valley Association–24th Street Community Benefit District
Contact: Debra Niemann, 519-0093
Dispatch: To report spills or debris on 24th Street, call Billy Dinnell, 802-4461.
Email: info@noevalleyassociation.org.
Website: noevalleyassociation.org
Board meetings: Quarterly. See website.

Noe Valley Farmers Market
Open Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Tuesdays, 3 to 7 p.m.; 3861 24th St. between Vicksburg and Sanchez.
Contact: Leslie Crawford, 248-1332
Email: info@noevalleyfarmersmarket.com

Noe Valley Merchants and Professionals Association (NVMPA)
Contact: Rachel Swann, 225-7743
Meetings: Last Thursdays, Old Republic, 4045A 24th St., 9 a.m. Call to confirm.
Website: www.NoeValleyMerchants.com

Noe Valley Parent Network
An e-mail resource network for parents
Contact: Mina Kenvin
Email: minaken@gmail.com

Noe Valley Parents, San Francisco
Listserv contact: noevalleyparent-owner@yahoogroups.com. Subscribe: noevalleyparentsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

Progress Noe Valley
Facebook: facebook.com/ProgressNoeValley
Email: progressnoe@gmail.com
Website: progressnoe.com
Meetings: Check Facebook page for current meeting and event schedule.

Resilient Noe Valley
Contact: Antoinette
Email: resilientnoevalley@gmail.com
Newsletter signup:
http://eepurl.com/gYuCD5
Website: www.resilientnoevalley.com

San Francisco NERT (Neighborhood Emergency Response Team)
Contact: Noe Valley NERT Neighborhood Team co-coordinators Maxine Fasulis, mfasulis@yahoo.com; Carole Roberts, carole_roberts@faludi.com
Website: https://SF-fire.org
New classes will be commencing soon. Visit the SF NERT website for more information.

San Jose/Guerrero Coalition to Save Our Streets
Contact: Don Oshiro, 285-8188
Email: contact@sanjoseguerrero.com
Website: sanjoseguerrero.com
Meetings: See website.

Friends of Slow Sanchez
Contacts: Christopher Keene, Andrew Casteel
Email: info@SlowSanchez.com
Website: SlowSanchez.com

Upper Noe Merchants
Contact: Info@UpperNoeNeighbors.com
https://uppernoeneighbors.com/merchants/

Upper Noe Neighbors
Contact: Olga Milan-Howells, 756-4455
Email: President@UpperNoeNeighbors.com
Meetings: Bi-monthly on third Wednesday. Upper Noe Recreation Center, 295 Day St. Call to confirm.

THE NOE VALLEY VOICE
editor@noevalleyvoice.com
All phone numbers are in the 415 area code, unless otherwise noted.

You can learn a lot from a chicken.

CDS
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At Children's Day School, chickens—and eggs—are some of our best teachers. With our main campus a home to a working farm and organic garden, we've made the environment a core component of a rigorous curriculum that is project-based, integrated across academic disciplines and designed to prepare and inspire. We expect great things of our students, because we know that passionate citizens change the world.

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www.cds-sf.org

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**5 BED | 4.5 BATH*

**4,304 SQFT*

**BUILT-IN MIELE APPLIANCES*

**SPRAWLING DECKS*

**INDOOR OUTDOOR LIVING*

**ENTERTAINERS OASIS*

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**FOUR TWO-BEDROOM RESIDENCES, INCLUDING TWO LUXURY PENTHOUSE UNITS*

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**TWO THREE-BEDROOM RESIDENCES*

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