



# THE NOE VALLEY VOICE

## Writers Rising

This Edition Devoted to the Other Voices of Our Neighbors and Friends

By Jack Tipple

The magic born out of the creative process takes center stage in this issue of the *Voice*. The news and feature writers and photographers that provide a monthly look at what's happening in Noe Valley and vicinity are on vacation. Mazook, Art, Sally, Matthew, Corrie and Karol will be back with the September edition. While ad manager Pat Rose (415-608-7634) and I put this one out. We're grateful for the participation of A.D. Collins, Clara Peng, Dale Fehringer, Dan Richman, Daniel Murphy, Grace D'Anca, Jeff Kaliss, Judy Irving, Mark Thoma, Sandy Nakamura, Susan Broxon, Sharon Elswit, Wendy Burch Steel and Brandon Sparks. May their words carry and inform you.

Special thanks to Harry Ballard for his photography, proving that black and white images can be most effective and evocative.



"The path is worn down, but you can make your own..." Even when fog obscures the way, with practice you can find the light.

Photo by Harry Ballard

## An Ode to San Francisco Museums

By Clara Peng

This year is my first summer in San Francisco, and my first time exploring our eclectic city. When my family moved after 14 years living in Seattle, I was dismayed at the thought of a new and unfamiliar place, somewhere that didn't feel like home. However, amidst San Francisco's wide variety of events and activities, one part of its vibrant culture has truly won me over.

Ever since I was a young child, I have always had a special place in my heart for museums. I plan to major in anthropology, and pursue my interest in museum ethics. The air of wonder, excitement, and curiosity inspired by these institutes of information have always made me feel welcome. As a high school senior, many of the city's museums offer free or discounted admission- and for Bay Area residents, most have monthly or weekly discounted or free admission days as well. In the digital age, activities like museum days have become less popular- but programs such as these encourage visitors of all demographics. The effect of increasing accessibility is apparent in the bustling crowds in some of the city's most unique and fascinating museums.

In scouting out different exhibits and collections, my experience with museum history and curatorship has helped me notice the distinctive San Francisco touch in each one. I am active in taking care of my high school's Anthropology Museum, researching and writing about our artifacts as well as considering ethical collection practices. A handful of the museums I have frequented have been great examples of displaying educational exhibits while emphasizing the fact that while their resources are non-comprehensive, encouraging further exploration. In particular, the California Academy of Sciences, and Asian Art Museum, and the de Young Museum have both impressive, astonishing displays and thoughtful exhibitions. Museums like the Truhlsen-Marmor Museum of the Eye, The San Francisco Cable Car Museum, and The Beat Museum offer captivating stories, ideal for visits to some of the most exciting neighborhoods.

The rich history of San Francisco is waiting, all throughout the city! My initial doubts towards a brand new hometown and unknown neighborhood have been quickly dispelled by the communities gathered in The Bay. Before I knew it, this city's energetic cultures, extensive museums and historical collections have made San Francisco my home.

## Flash Conversation

By Mark Thoma

Odd to dread getting wet in a drought. This thought came to me as I climbed the stairs up from the Embarcadero underground. I readied my thumb on the button while my eyes scanned the stairs looking for that transition step from dry to wet, a little game I play to release the spring and let fly the umbrella at the exact place where the overhang ends and the rain falls. Tricking the Storm. Cat and Mouse. As if the heavens could possibly lose.

No matter. The strategy's the fun, and so as I scanned and stepped, scanned and stepped. I saw the soaked cement marking the push button zone and readied for the strike when a man hurrying down the steps accidentally met eyes with mine, each of us dodging rain, he black, I white, both with gray hair and somewhere to be.

"Will this rain ever end? he said to me". "Sure doesn't seem like it", I replied. And at that moment we said together, "you have a good day."

As I took the last step and walked onto Market Street, my head wet for missing the button zone, I puzzled over the two of us meeting and departing for an instant in this lifetime, two men navigating the world and trying to stay dry, two strangers who didn't feel like strangers.

## I Like to Think I Sang Yome Yome to Her

By Sharon Elswit

at the end  
as she sang to me, gently  
tucking the wry, self-deprecatory words in along with loose strands of my hair  
before I was older and did insist like young Yome  
no, Mother, no  
you don't understand  
for she gave me every spring I needed  
to get started, beginning with  
the buoyancy of this song

Clara Peng is a high school senior living in Noe Valley.

Mark Thoma writes poetry and is a semi-retired medical social worker.

After guiding NYC schoolchildren with Poetry at Dawn for 10 years, Sharon Elswit now relishes her young grandson's lyrical creation as he softly sings his own excavator song, "Up and down the dirt/ Up and down the dirt" over the Noe hills.



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Ross M.



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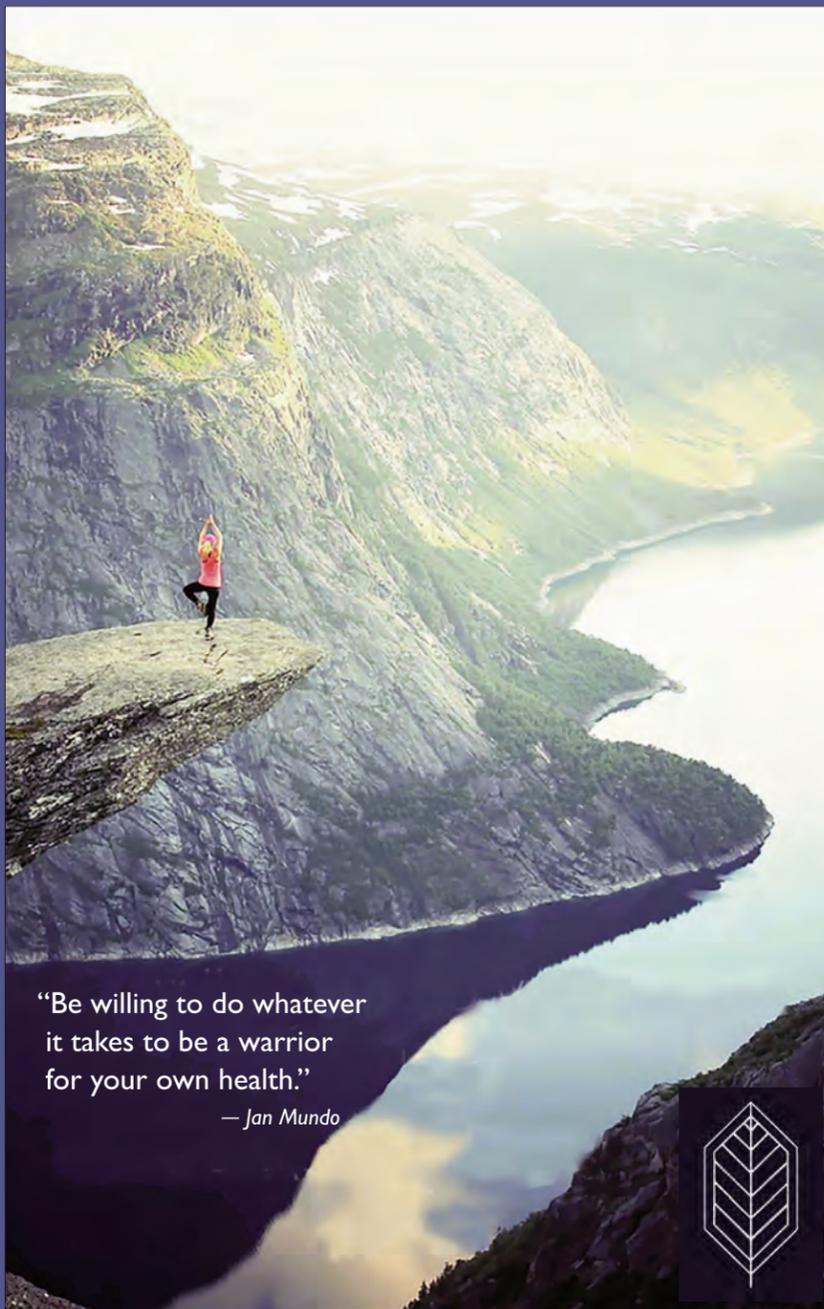
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Photo by Harry Ballard

## Get Lit

The next literary edition of *The Noe Valley Voice* will be in January 2024.

Email your submissions by December 15, 2023.

Thank you.

[editor@noevalleyvoice.com](mailto:editor@noevalleyvoice.com)



## Nice Noe

By Brandon Sparks

Having seen a million dollar toilet, let me say first that it is not what you think. Please do not misunderstand me. It is beautiful and the elegance of its architecture is quite ordinary at first glance. The structure is much more subtle than some of her more crude nicknames might imply. The point of all this of course is that you would only spend a million dollars on a toilet for what it does for the space around it and not for the toilet itself.

Having now experienced the joys of the Douglass Playground basketball court, yes, we are quite in favor of the measure to approve the budget for the Noe Valley public works department facilities and construction for the fiscal year ending in June 2024. We should all be more kind to ourselves and it is through our kindness to others that we become more kind to ourselves.

San Francisco is a town of hourly seasons and much chaos. It is home to the St. John Coltrane African Orthodox Church. In any event, there is a great deal which can be learned from chaos— John Coltrane knew it. Interstellar Space is evidence of assault by musical instrument, yet ultimately redemptive. Chaos is a good place for finding oneself.

At any rate, there must be something about the word “no” spelled with an ‘e’ at the end. It comes off as slightly less confrontational than its more concise counterpart though nonetheless assertive. Yes, there is something about Noe Valley which is unmistakably nice. There is, however, a difference between kindness and being nice and the good folks of Noe Valley can also appreciate the value of a subtle distinction.

I am quite certain they can appreciate this distinction because Noe Valley is the venue of the great toilet debate of twenty three. The crux of this debate seems to come down to this question: should we or should we not spend one million dollars on a toilet seat? The question of course overlies a great deal more than is presented on the surface.

Who is we? And, if we does indeed mean the good folks of Noe Valley, then this— are we being too nice?

The good folks of Noe Valley seem to have been wrestling with this question through the early days and weeks of the “summer” of 2023. The summer, of course, consisting here of daily seasons and all the emotional sensitivity which that implies in a post-2020 world. It may suffice to say that this debate has been going on in one form or another for quite a while.

You can hear the murmurings of polite, though nonetheless crucial debate through the rail lines on Church Street. You can hear it in the Valley Tavern and hear it in the Town Square. You can hear debate through the muffled voices at the Noe Valley Cafe.

You hear it and hear it and hear it again like tinnitus until, all of a sudden, it goes away. When it goes, it goes so quietly and without evidence that you could scarcely be certain that it was there in the first place.

On and on this question has jogged your mind until one evening you have run up Duncan Street to the top of the hill and you’re walking down Douglass Street now and you can see the yellow and green street lamps casting their warm light on the Douglass Playground and there it is— a million dollar toilet. It has hit you square between the eyes and it is undeniable.

**B.S.W. Sparks** is “summering” in Noe Valley and otherwise a resident of South Austin, Texas

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As I set out on foot from my hotel to Noe Valley, the mid-May morning brought muddied clouds and cool temperatures, contrasting my last two trips when the sun glistened against a baby blue sky.

Trekking along Market Street, I received a text from my sister, Janet, who half-jokingly instructed me to "walk with a purpose" as she awaited my arrival on 24th Street. However, given the renewed rush hour madness and the constant dodging of pedestrians in my path, I was already in full swing. Then, as I stepped off the grid and onto the succoring Dolores Street, the sun broke through the clouds, and a free-floating sensation filled me as I eased into the uphill climb.

My initial rediscovery journeys to this nostalgic neighborhood since departing the Bay Area in 2006 came in the spring and fall of 2022.

On this third visit, my sister and twin nephews, Finn, and Aidan, would join me. Over the years, we have reconnected in Maine, Southern California, and once for a vacation in the Bahamas. Yet, this was our first reunion in San Francisco since their departure from Noe Valley to Brunswick, Maine, in the Summer of 2003.

Still, when I reached 24th Street, none of the three were around. So, I took advantage of the serene state in the Square and beelined to the "little red rider" slide. When I perched on it, Janet



Sliding in the Square.

Photos Courtesy of Susan Broxon

## Savoring the Sentiment

By Susan Broxon

appeared and got a picture as I slid down. Soon after, the guys came, and we gathered outside at our old haunt, Martha & Bros. Coffee. Sitting in the same spot with two towering gentlemen, long advanced from the whimsical toddlers in the Graco double-stroller twenty years ago, felt bittersweetly surreal.

Born in late 2000, they recall little about their three years in the community. Even so, I'm sure I witnessed Finn in a reflective moment; he even mentioned he was experiencing "an eerie feeling" about being on his former stomping grounds. And now, well past the teenage rebellion years, they both happily posed for photos.

It was more than I expected, given Finn,

a recent graduate of the University of Maine, and Aidan, completing his final semester before he graduates from the University of Southern Maine, are naturally engaged in fast-forward mode, not rewinding into the past. That morning they had already been on an impromptu brewery tour (the reason for their tardiness) where Uncle Dan, their dad's brother, and a resident of Noe Valley, was formerly employed. And while I could have lingered contentedly over a second cup of coffee, they were understandably eager to carry on.

Admittedly, my sentiment for this ever-distinctive district got buried following the return to my hometown, Newport Beach, in 2006. On my first post-pandemic trip to San Francisco in May of 2022, I sadly concluded the magic had

dissipated from the city that once felt like it belonged exclusively to me. Hit with an instinctive yearning to escape into an era I remember as less affected and more forgiving, I sought comfort in this outer haven of San Francisco. And on that dazzling Spring Day, I recaptured the reminiscent soulful spirit under the warm sun in the newly discovered Town Square.

While I served as a glorified guest, Janet resided in Noe Valley for eighteen years. And after a decade of living in the Marina, I abandoned the City in 2000 for a more affordable property in the East Bay. So, when visiting the neighborhood and strolling my nephews around, it was amusingly refreshing to be seen as "a local mom out with her kids." Of course, life had its challenges then too. Following an uncalled-for period of unemployment in 2001, my excursions into the city accelerated. Though I began some days feeling disconnected and uninspired, once in town, I was invariably uplifted by vigorous stroller pushing, friendly neighbor chats, and the purity of participation in a Day Street Recreation Center sing-along.

As fleeting as our coffee outing felt this past Spring, we hung around long enough for a former neighbor to recognize Janet in Martha Bros. She followed Janet outside to refamiliarize herself with the boys and recalled their mini long-ago versions.

Soon after, we boarded the J Church Muni to explore untested terrain. As the streetcar descended, I looked out the window and down our beloved 24th Street. Harboring a pang of wistfulness, I wondered when the four of us might meet there again.

Until then, I will savor the sentiment.



Aidan and Finn today.



Vintage stroller days with Finn and Aidan.

Susan Broxon's debut piece, "Farewell for Now," appeared in the November 2003 edition of the Voice. Other featured works resulting from her recent nostalgic revisits include "Sunshine and Strawberry Smaltz" (October 2022) and "Sundry Sunday" (January 2023). Currently, she resides in Corona Del Mar, California.



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Most of the year, the air is cold and damp by the Great Highway. The Pacific winds blow the pollen and organic dust like projectiles against the windows to justify keeping them shuttered. Only a handful of days allow those windows to be cranked open.

There was the cool smell of air rushing into the room. I could putter around and get my work done.

In a short while, I could hear birds singing. The sound would come and go, but it always made my heart jump with joy. Birds do have a way with song. The singing became progressively louder until I could hear a bit of rustling on the metal frame of the window. I looked out through the screen and noticed bits of grass and leaves on the side.

Two birds were talking loudly to each other as each one added a small twig or a few flowers on the ledge of the frame. A small wind would blow a piece off now and then. The birds became louder and more agitated as the process of nesting took hold.

"I like it here. This is perfect," she said.

"I tell you, this is not a good spot. See that person looking at us through the screen?"

"Maybe she will have food for us. She might have some popcorn."

He looked at her and wailed, "You are living in a fantasy world. One big wind and this all goes down. Plus there's nowhere to build a room for my things."

"What are you talking about. There's a long ledge and protection from the elements with the open window. Plenty of room for worms."

That's not very protective. It's only good against rain. If the wind picks up, our family home is gone."



Photo by Harry Ballard

a few blue eggs and sitting on them were floating through her mind. She decided to get a nice sprig of lavender to add to the décor, flying down to the garden below when a rush of air pierced through the yard and up to the window ledge, knocking the entire structure to float aimlessly to the ground.

"See? We spent all afternoon building this house, and I knew it would fall," he chirped.

She was sad. "I had such dreams..." He went over to her and chirped into her face, covering it with his. "We will find another house. I promise." And they flew off together.

As it got colder in my room, I closed the window. I didn't hear the birds or see any remnant of the nest. Just a memory flying against the wind.

## House Hunting

By A.D. Collins

All day long, they fought through their own songs, while continuing to work together to build a nest in the worst of all spots. I knew I would have to close the window which would wipe out the nest and a full day's work this couple put into building it. At sundown, the air would become freezing cold and there was no way I would keep the window open, even if there was a makeshift nest on the ledge.

When the wind would pick up just for a moment, a few pieces of the nest would fly away. "Let me sit on this for awhile and mold it to my shape," she told him.

"Then the pieces won't fly away."

He waited just outside the window, repeating, "that's not going to matter soon. The wind is picking up."

Dreams of his man cave nest were dissipating in his mind, while dreams of laying

**Adriana Delia Collins** works all day in finance and writes on the side. A few of her pieces have been published in US and international magazines. She's a fan of the Pacific shore having lived on the Atlantic shore for many years. San Francisco's bird population is a lot like the human population - always searching for the perfect family home. Here's one couple's experience.



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## Three Poems

By Wendy Burch Steel

### QUESTION

What will they say when  
you take out your scissors,  
and bending low over the river  
sweep your thick hair forward  
And cut it off

What will they do when you have washed  
your face and broken all your mirrors  
and carry your bowl with you  
in the streets

How will they react  
when you begin to hold the sick  
and the dying in your arms  
to stroke the knotted stomachs of  
hungry children,  
carry them on your back into the markets  
to buy them bread

What will occur when you can  
no longer speak about anything  
of importance  
when they find you have taken  
everything and given it all away  
when they find that what they  
say about you means nothing

What will happen when your poems  
make no sense to anyone  
because all they contain is  
the same one syllable

When your poets' hands become  
shadow wings  
and the people stare as the flocks  
gather overhead  
and Home is a return to them,  
and Poem is a fatal arrow  
into the heart  
of the heart

### LANDSCAPE

These hands are a face unshielded sun & wind  
Fortune tellers have looked at these hands and  
turned away in silence. You have very old hands  
they say & study my face. But you see my hands  
are my face.

These scars are animals I've loved teeth  
& claws drew blood in play & this scar was a sore  
that just wouldn't heal.

This line is for death my child my father  
my mother the earth these hands belong to them.

These furrows are for dying love & undying love  
Love dead and gone and reborn.

These are trees planted wood chopped shit shoveled  
rocks climbed bodies stroked clocks set  
typewriters & guitars, paintbrushes & knives  
vegetables & the kneading of bread.

These hands are small and wide and strong  
freckles fly across the golden skin like sand or  
brown geese they have pushed through oceans  
of water, air, fire

my nails grow like wheat.

These hands are my face so look closely at these hands  
Hold them up to the light.

### LOOK FOR ME IF YOU WILL LOOK FOR YOU

& you too if God doesn't look into the faces a store window of  
yourself or catch a glimpse out among people try it the next time  
you go.

Not without admitting we don't know what we mean, not really.  
Nothing to hope that you can name the truth & I from walking  
into the sea that keeps you the unnameable

Or even see it we cannot help it we are also unfolding ourselves.  
Sleepwalkers, out of body & eyes blankly though we stare. Full  
of such blossoms, a garden in the eye of a blossom the sudden  
opening.

That they had assumed God's face nor did they care. These  
people did not seem to realize I could see very plainly your  
breath to be suddenly taken, your heart to jump, all defenses of  
you stripped & you look simply: who is able?

in a lover's glance shattered overtaken,  
I was like someone

And then another, another face That this was a shadow I  
knew without, suddenly. A person's face a passing face  
& looked into as I walked by it happened. Looking at me, today  
by the face of God I was startled.



Photo by Harry Ballard

**Wendy Burch Steel** received her master's degree in poetry and creative writing at San Francisco State University. She has been published nationally and internationally, and has collaborated with other musicians, composers, poets, and artists, using her original vocal work, poetry, and performance in many live readings and on KPFA Radio and local television. Her two books of poetry are *Iridescent*, *Madly* and *Traffic Prayers*. Steel is also a singer-songwriter and band leader in the Americana band Wendy Burch Steel & Redwood. She lives in the Oakland Hills.

Long before the covid pandemic, and before the current talk of removing the orchestra section from the Castro Theater, my wife and I can be found standing in line near the century-old theater's box office. We are waiting to see an obscure French mystery film, scheduled for 1:15 p.m. No one else is waiting.

As my wife placidly reads a novel, I become uneasy. Two strangers are lingering near the box office. With their shoulder bags, and their apparent interest in the architecture of the old theater, they may be French tourists, as their conversation suggests, or worse, line-jumpers disguised as language students.

It's troubling. The theater only seats fourteen hundred people. If these interlopers make a sudden rush for tickets when the box office opens at 12:45, my wife and I won't be the first two people to enter the theater.

We will become only numbers "3" and "4." It's an unpleasant prospect. Then even more trouble lumbers into sight.

A familiar figure is walking towards the theater. Thirty-five years old, overweight, clad in blue overalls, Clay Barger approaches the box office. He is carrying his usual bag of theater edibles. I know Clay both by observation and reputation. He is always first in line at any Bay Area art movie. An irritating fellow, this Clay Barger.

Surely, my wife and I are legally entitled to enter the theater before Barger, but just as surely, he will know a corrupted theater employee who will not observe the law of first in line.

Clay has become heavier. Will he claim his weight as a disability? Will he, in a word, have managed to eat his way to the head of the line? I worry, while my wife continues only to read. Will the box office ever open, so that we can buy our tickets and enter? Can I stand fifteen minutes more of this pressure?

It is now 12:30. Barger passes near us, his contraband foods stuffed into a shopping bag. What stratagem will he employ,



1964 photo from the San Francisco Public Library Historic Collection

## First in Line at the Castro

By Daniel C. Murphy

and what counter measure can I take? No court of law could overlook the fact that we are first in line. Is it not a legal maxim that "first in time is first in right?" But what good will it be to apply for a restraining order against Clay Barger, if he has already entered the Castro Theater, enjoyed the French movie, eaten a large carton of potato salad, and departed to see another movie before dinner? "Justice delayed is justice denied" is another legal maxim which comes to mind.

Barger observes us. Then, just as I have done, he examines the two 1964/1964 "French" strangers, wondering about their true identities. Suddenly, he reaches into his pocket for the document which I have dreaded, some type of pass

that will allow him priority entrance.

At that moment, the theater door opens unexpectedly. Barger extracts from his pocket a bright blue pass marked "Special Priority" and walks toward the theater manager.

"Good to see you, Mike," Barger says to him, "How's the wife, and that sweet dog of yours? Here's my Special Priority pass," and he hands the pass to the manager.

"I'm sorry, Clay," says the manager, "but

I have to make an announcement." He steps around Barger and addresses the crowd, consisting of my wife and me, and the two "French" strangers, "I'm sorry folks," he says, "but we have to cancel today's matinee show because of a problem with our 16-millimeter projector. We called Berkeley to borrow another projector, it's the only other one available for these early French films, but they can't bring it to us until our 7pm showing tonight."

Clay Barger has already hailed a cab. I hear him say to the driver, "The Vogue Theater, and fast! We have only 15 minutes before they start their feature." Barger disappears into the taxi.

The two men, conversing in French, take some photos of the Castro marquee, consult a green Michelin guide, and enter the bar on the corner.

My wife looks up from her novel. She says to me, "I wish we didn't have to get to these movies so early."

"Sometimes these old French mystery movies draw sellout crowds," I reply. I think of suggesting that we continue standing in line until the 7 o'clock show, but sense that it would not be wise to say anything more, as we walk down Castro Street to catch the 24 Muni.

**Daniel C. Murphy** is a retired trial attorney, who was born and raised in Noe Valley. He has been a long-time contributor to the Voice. He is married to Lloyd Murphy, a retired public-school teacher. They live on Church Street. Dan says they like to think of themselves as "Nick and Nora," but without the cocktails.

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Photo by Harry Ballard

## The 230 Jones Street Local 6 Literary Jazz Band at Bird & Beckett

By Jeff Kaliss

*Chuck Peterson (leader, tenor sax); Howie Dudune (tenor sax, clarinet); Glen Deardorff (guitar); Dean Reilly (bass); Tony Johnson (drums)*

The band in the bookstore.  
The books will have to watch from their bookcases,  
Waiting to sing through their covers,  
While white-haired men,  
Warmed by a small gathering of smiles in folding chairs,  
Make music for the end of week, or of life.

"Want an intro?", Dean inquires.  
"It'll be three flats," Chuck decides, for  
"There Will Never Be Another You".

There will never be another young Howie,  
Hankering beyond the bell of his tenor sax  
For that chick in the black beret and tight turtleneck,  
Back in that place in the Village, after the War,  
But Howie's melody lingers here.  
Short white Dean takes a black man's jaunty stroll  
Among thick strings along a tall bass,  
And gazes down at little Esmé,  
Next to the audience,  
Next to her daddy  
With his European stubble and whispered accent.  
Dean sees her nod with the beat of Thing One and Thing Two,  
Holding her Seuss in her lap in her stroller.

Off to "Perdido", another from the frisky Forties.

From his raised and tuneful licorice stick  
Howie pours Pernod for Esme's père,  
While Glen cajoles the kid in period jive.  
Our hearts arrest with Tony's paradiddles.  
But we find the Past in this "Perdido",  
Where it's bailed out by the Present  
And released to the custody of Esmé's Future.

Raindrops fall from "I'll Remember April",  
Blurring our arid modern autumn.

Now deeper in the set, the players get younger.  
Howie remembers what he used to say and how he said it.  
Glen is writing down numbers in his little red book again.  
Chuck is picking out pretty colors for a seductive bouquet.  
Tony knocks on more than one door at the nurses' residence hall.

They'll all remember April, and we with them, as they used to,  
Over cheap shots poured out strong,  
Late into the dim early hours,  
After the gig.

— Jeff Kaliss, 2015

**Jeff Kaliss** poeticizes about his loves, particularly of music and place. He's also a longtime journalist for the *Noe Valley Voice* and many publications worldwide and online and an author, covering mostly music.



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Photo courtesy Leonard Majzlin

## The Luddite Club

By Judy Irving

If you have a cell phone and are thinking of giving it up, please be in touch. If you never had one, please be in touch. If you had one but gave it up, please be in touch. I've started doing research on people like you. This may or may not turn into a movie; more likely, it will turn into an essay. I would love to hear your stories! PS: I've never had a cell phone, nor do I want one. I understand that this is a privileged position in a world that often requires employees to have them. But I'm freelance. I also understand that parents want to keep their children safe, and to know where they are. I don't have children. So it's not for everyone, this notion of life without a cell phone. But if it resonates with you, I'm at [films@pelicanmedia.org](mailto:films@pelicanmedia.org) Thanks!

Background: Last December I read an article in the New York Times about a group of Brooklyn high school students who had given up their cell phones and were meeting every Sunday in Prospect Park to talk to each other, play music, go for walks, look at birds, knit, sew, paint, draw – i.e., live life in the real world rather than a small screen. This fascinated me, especially the fact that the idea came from the students themselves; it was not something forced on them by adults. In fact, many of the parents didn't want their teenagers to give up their cell phones because then they couldn't track where they were! (or be in touch in an emergency). The first "Luddite Club" spawned two more at nearby Brooklyn high schools. I've been trying to find similar small, underground, grass-roots rebellions here in the Bay Area, but have so far come up empty. If you know of anything, please let me know! Here's the link to the NY Times piece:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/style/teens-social-media.html>

In the late 90s **Judy Irving** wrote an article titled "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill" for the *Noe Valley Voice*. The story resulted in a benefactor loaning her nonprofit project the money needed to do most of the filming for the movie of the same name. Now, 20 years after the film's premiere, it will soon re-release as a 4K remastered version. Irving lived in Noe Valley from 1977 to 2001 when she moved to Telegraph Hill.



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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 55 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.



Photo by Harry Ballard

## Margarita?

By Sandy Nakamura

"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, makeup, 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!"

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

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Photo by Jack Tipple



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In these traditionally slow summer months of SF real estate, the overall US economy looks to be headed for a soft landing. Will this make for a strong Fall market? Consumer sentiment reached a near two-year high, inflation slowed to just 3 percent in June, the lowest since March 2021, and joblessness has barely increased. Despite the Fed's aggressive rate rises over the past 18 months, the odds of a recession are falling. Economic activity is resilient, and the stock market has rebounded. San Francisco's home prices are still off their mark from their highs of early 2022, but they are much stronger than their lows of late 2022. Buyers seem to have accepted the new interest rates and are actively pursuing their home ownership dreams — albeit a tad pickier. Sellers are in control again, opting to hold until stronger market conditions are confirmed — creating a lack of inventory, and increased competition for well priced, well prepared homes. Homes with all the bells and whistles — location, good finishes, parking, etc — are selling swiftly. Off market sales where the seller, with their Realtor's guidance, chooses their price and offers their impeccably lived in home for sale for a short window of opportunity is now a savvy seller option. Call Jessica to explore the creative options available to you in this ever changing market. 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. Call Jessica today at 415.341.7177 for a free, no-strings estimate of your home's value.

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COMPASS

## Three Poems

By Dan Richman

### HIGH ON PORTOLA

Lights shiver  
 through a notch in the Monterey pines  
 off Portola. They are car lights,  
 the nervous impulses  
 up the spine and down  
 of the Bay Bridge.  
 All the sparks of Oakland  
 are answered on the brass sheen  
 of the Bay, while up,  
 up, a few stars swim in the dark. But  
 they're not all stars!  
 See the blinking red and green?  
 Planes!  
 Those amazing machines  
 crammed with people, are reaching  
 for other cities,  
 other highways,  
 other rooms.  
 Go with God, my kinsfolk!  
 May your companions be well-bred.  
 May your vistas be grand.  
 May you land as softly as  
 a dandelion's parachute  
 on bent grass.

### PERIOD

When I opened The London Review of Books  
 this morning while eating breakfast  
 I watched a period quit its place  
 at the end of a sentence  
 in a piece on Grecian  
 vase painting, skitter  
 down the margin  
 and like a trapeze artist  
 flip into the next article  
 on the state of things in Poland.

Astounded, I opened to Poland  
 and with my magnifier saw that the  
 period was a tiny spider  
 with eight legs, several eyes  
 and all the spiderish characteristics  
 you would expect  
 in one of those creatures  
 climbing a wall  
 or dreaming at the crux of a web.

So it wasn't a manic  
 typo that caught my eye,  
 but a living being, a tiny  
 living thing with heart and lungs  
 and guts and eyes, driven  
 by hunger and sex and fear as  
 the rest of us are.

"Well, little sister," I said  
 to the creature  
 (for lately I've been  
 talking to other  
 forms of life  
 whether they gallop or fly  
 or tunnel their tentacles into the soil,  
 though I admit  
 I blabber away  
 but struggle with their responses,  
 so it's a stilted conversation),

"How are things in Warsaw?"



Photo by Harry Ballard

### BACK BEAT

For Levon Helm

If reincarnation is more than wishful thinking  
 I'd like to pop back  
 as a rock drummer,  
 the wheels on which the whole  
 choo-choo rolls.  
 No matter how much the guitarist  
 strangles the neck on his beast,  
 how far into space  
 the pianist  
 launches off the keys;  
 even if the insides of the singer  
 land in the  
 laps of the audience,  
 the drummer bangs along  
 with a constant religious beat, the beat  
 of the heart, the beat  
 the ocean keeps  
 in the surf that pummels beaches.  
 I've heard there's an impeccable beat  
 in the cosmos,  
 in every cell.  
 So that drummers of rock,  
 those heroes  
 courageous enough  
 to surrender themselves  
 to the rhythm that holds together worlds,  
 support the song now sung.

**Dan Richman** has published four books of poetry, three novels, a memoir, and a book on Ancient Greek Myth. And he's still at it.



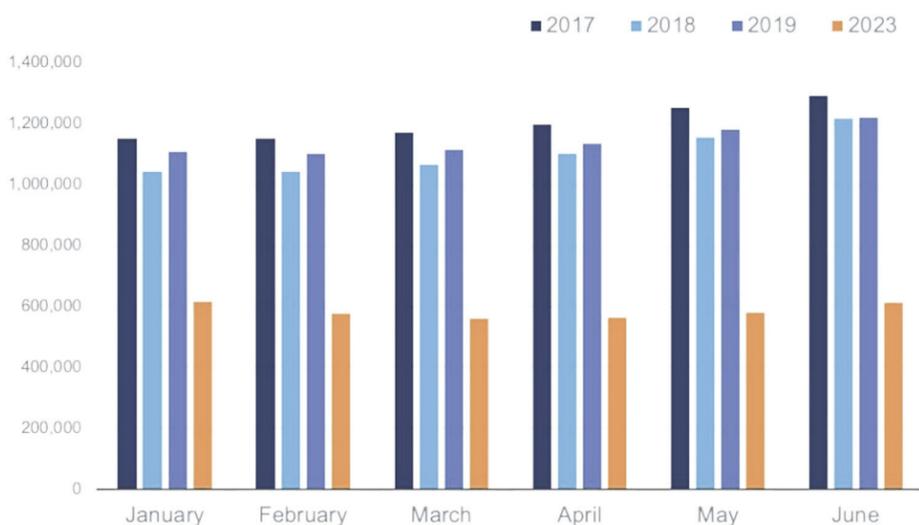
**The Colors of the Day.** A vibrant community that always looks up.

Photo by Jack Tipple

## REAL ESTATE MARKET TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

# LOW HOUSING INVENTORY IS A SWEET SPOT FOR SELLERS

*“On average, active inventory in June was 50.6% below pre-pandemic 2017–2019 levels.”* - Realtor.com



It is worth mentioning that the years 2020-2022 are not shown in this graph. This is due to the fact that these were very unusual years for the housing market. To make the comparison fair, some have been removed so that the data is not affected. When the orange bars for 2023 are compared to the past regular years for the property market (2017-2019), the number of active listings is still much below what is normal.

If you're thinking about selling your home, the low inventory makes it an excellent opportunity to do so. Buyers have fewer options now than they did in more normal years, and this is continuing to affect certain important home market indicators. Sellers, for example, will be encouraged with the following data from the National Association of Realtors' (NAR) recent Consumer Index:

### How This Impacts You

Homes that are priced right are still selling quickly and seeing multiple offers. Compared to the previous month:



The percent of homes sold in less than a month:

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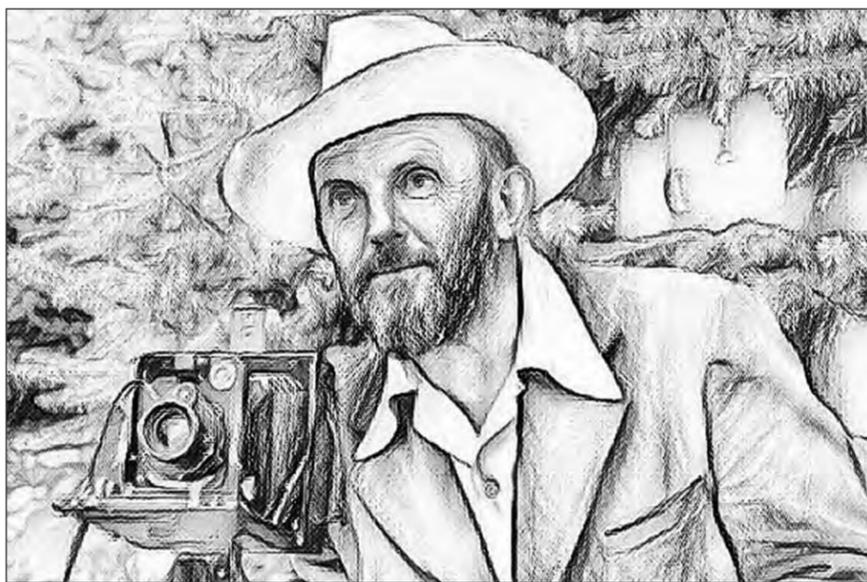


Image by J.Arthur Milestone

## Ansel Adams: Visualizing Photographs

By Dale Fehringer

With cameras built into cell phones today, a lot of us consider ourselves photographers. We see something interesting, point our phone at it, and press the button. That's how it works, right? Well not really, according to Ansel Adams, one of the best photographers of all time. He believed the best photos result from advanced planning and practiced execution – a process he called “visualization.”

Adams was born in 1902 in the Fillmore District of San Francisco. One of his early memories was seeing the smoke from the earthquake and fire of 1906. He suffered a broken nose during an aftershock, which threw him into a garden wall. As a boy, his family moved to the western part of the city, where he had views of the Golden Gate, Marin Headlands, Baker Beach, and Lands End. He was a high-strung kid – gangly, nervous, and odd looking – with few friends, so he entertained himself by playing the piano, became an accomplished musician, and decided to make that his profession. But, as a teenager, he travelled to Yosemite with his parents, who gave him a Brownie camera. He fell in love with Yosemite (“there was light everywhere” he later said), with photography, and with Virginia Best, daughter of a Yosemite concessioner. For years, he spent his summers photographing Yosemite and his winters working on his musical skills, and he pondered whether to pursue music or photography. Eventually, he chose photography and married Virginia. Both turned out to be good choices.

Adams spent years hiking and photographing Yosemite Valley, perfecting his art. Some of his photographs turned out better than others, and he occasionally became frustrated with his progress. Then, in 1927, he had a breakthrough. After hiking to a strategic position to photograph Half Dome, he had materials left for just two more shots. He took one photo with a yellow filter, but he decided that wouldn't produce the image he had in mind, so for his final photo he switched to a red filter. The resulting photo turned out to be exactly what he wanted. That, he decided, was the secret: pre-plan (or visualize) his photographs, and then adjust the filters, exposure, and development to make it turn out that way.

From then on, Adams meticulously recorded camera settings for every photo, matched it with the result, and adjusted his future photographs to produce higher-quality results. It turned out to be a revolutionary method of producing photographs.

Ironically, perhaps his most famous photograph was taken almost spontaneously in 1941, while Adams was on a contract with the National Park Service. Driving through New Mexico one evening, Adams happened across a scene of a church and cemetery near a small town. The light from the fading sun and rising moon were just right, and he stopped the car, quickly set up a camera, and took a photo of the rising moon, illuminated clouds, and glowing light on white cemetery crosses. The photo, which he called Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, was part of the recent exhibit of his work, entitled Ansel Adams in our Time, at the DeYoung Museum.

Adams was an environmentalist, conservationist, and long-time board member of the Sierra Club. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his efforts to protect America's wilderness.

Adams was lucky. He had a long and very successful career, a wife who supported him, and the opportunity to work with some of the best photographers of his time. He worked tirelessly, usually seven days a week, and produced some of the best landscape photos of all time. As he aged, he lobbied to preserve the lands he loved, taught photographic methods, and gave lectures and interviews to help pass his techniques on to future generations of photographers.

When asked how he was able to produce such amazing photographs, he said "the whole key lies very specifically in seeing it in the mind's eye, which we call visualization. The picture has to be there very clearly and decisively -- and, if you have enough craft and have done your homework and practice, you can then make the photograph you desire."

**Dale Fehringer** is a long-term resident of Noe Valley. He has mostly written about people, and places he and Patty have travelled to. Up next - a book for children and a piece of fiction.

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**Ready for More Red.** Preparing another floral delivery from 24th Street.

*Photo by Jack Tipple*



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## Three Poems

By Grace D'Anca

### I WANTED TO KNOW HOW IT WOULD END FOR EKS 1944 - 2023

It's a big house now with too many rooms for two.  
How did they end up in a suburb  
in the first house built on open land

he from a flat above a cigar store commuters stormed  
every weekday morning, she  
from a tidy little house with a screen porch  
where her mother made May altars and prayed  
the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary during Lent.

She can only reach the bottom shelf now.  
Her crooked spine will not allow her to drag a chair  
to reach for the tin of dreams on the second shelf.  
She goes without. Puts on her red rimmed glasses  
so she won't step on the shards of hope  
that fell on the thick blue carpet when he died.

### CHICKEN OF THE SEA

I worried how  
would I get the storm  
windows off and the screens  
on from across the country.  
You both survived

forty-three winters so cold  
the icicles snapped  
so loud in the frigid night  
you woke before dawn.

She passed  
in late April and I forgot  
the storms and the screens.  
I worried

that you would not remember  
how to find your house  
or pay the light bill  
or mistake the cat's  
food for chicken  
of the sea. I

threaded the needles  
you asked for after  
your eyes were sewn  
and you wanted to make sure  
you could darn your socks.  
We finally

brought you  
across the country  
to a house  
with the crazy quilt  
we hid from the priest  
who came after it when  
Aunt Emma died  
the house with dotted swiss  
curtains from your bedroom  
dyed red now.

There was a cat  
there too.  
You didn't seem to know  
it wasn't home. You did  
wonder happened to  
Snelling avenue but  
you never noticed  
there were no storms  
or screens.



Photo by Harry Ballard

### QUEEN CASEY

She used to sing  
off key, forte  
some silly song  
we were surprised  
she knew.

She used to sing in front  
of the lace curtains  
overlooking the parking lot  
and the leaning eucalyptus tree  
I feared would collapse the house  
that El Nino.

She used to sing fortissimo  
in her red shirt with pastel hearts  
from Goodwill, always  
wrinkled.

She was four  
and it didn't matter  
then.

**Grace D'Anca** came to San Francisco in the mid-60's. She performed with small theater and improv dance ensembles, worked 45 years as a creative arts therapist with children, youth and adults, and collaborated with community groups to create murals, mosaics and cultural events. Now retired, she has come back full circle to writing, making art and drama, and dancing with the mirror.

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**Covid-19** Text "COVID19SF" to 888-777, see sf.gov/topics/coronavirus-covid-19, or call . . . 311  
**Burned-Out Streetlights**, city owned (wooden poles call PG&E) . . . . . 311  
**District 8 Supervisor** Rafael Mandelman, mandelmanstaff@sfgov.org . . . 415-554-6968  
**District 8 Community Safety Liaison** . . . . . Dave.Burke@sfgov.org  
**Graffiti Removal, Tree Removal, Street Cleaning (DPW)** . . . . . 415-695-2017  
**Homeless Services** Street Outreach Services (SOS) medical care . . . . . 415-355-2250  
**Lost or Injured Animals** Animal Care and Control . . . . . 415-554-6364  
**Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services** sfmayor.org . . . . . 415-554-7111  
**NERT** (SFFD Neighborhood Emergency Response Teams) . . . . . 415-970-2022  
**Parking Enforcement** DPT Dispatch . . . . . 415-553-1200  
**PG&E** Gas or electrical issues . . . . . 1-800-743-5000  
**Pothole Repairs** potholes@sfdpw.org . . . . . 415-554-5810  
**Recycling** Recology San Francisco (free pickup bulky items) . . . . . 415-330-1300  
**Rent Board San Francisco** phone counseling . . . . . 415-252-4600  
**Sewer Problems, Overflows** . . . . . 415-695-2096  
**SFMTA or Muni** Call 311 or email MTABoard@sfmta.com . . . . . 415-701-2311  
**Tree Planting** urbanforestry@sfdpw.org . . . . . 415-554-6700  
**24th Street Community Benefit District (Noe Valley Association)** . . 415-519-0093  
**Water Leaks, Water Pressure** . . . . . 415-554-3289

"There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm."  
—from The Song of the Lark by Willa Cather (1873–1947)

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## Three Poems

By Helen Dannenberg

### LET'S TALK

the morning  
a sunny day  
yes hello  
so glad to see you  
Let's talk

I love the way your rays look today  
reaching from the back windows  
way back to the front hallway behind the steps  
the wonderful shadows  
behind the big upsidedown curve of the  
kitchen sink faucet  
the snake hose lives there

I sit on the couch  
feel your lovely warm presence  
stay longer than noon  
when you leave to go further out to the garden  
I get jealous  
stay with me, don't go  
I want to keep you

I know you must go on with your day  
I am selfish, don't care  
you go  
my restlessness drives me out  
to find you  
Ah! There you are  
Let's talk

### DEFAULT TO THE HEART

Default to the heart  
you must  
in the time remaining  
bubbling annoyance  
sloppy irritation  
fixing someone's speech  
what is that  
but bubblegum on your shoe  
irrelevant annoying  
flick it off and dispose of it  
don't waste precious time  
in the forever of your life  
get to the heart of the matter  
the heart, the heart  
boom ba da boom (2 x)  
these phone calls are what is  
listen, remember  
say what you want him to hear  
don't let him interrupt  
remember the voice

laugh together  
about whatever  
little anything  
the dust ball on the floor  
the bumblebee on the blue cornflower  
laughter compassion empathy  
are good deposits  
in the forever of your life  
check your balance  
what needs beefing up, needs more  
attention  
work on it  
time is limited  
in the forever of our lives



Photo by Harry Ballard

### MELDING

two people  
met a long time ago  
made a life  
made two children  
lived in a culture  
absorbed by the children

she is here now then, will be gone

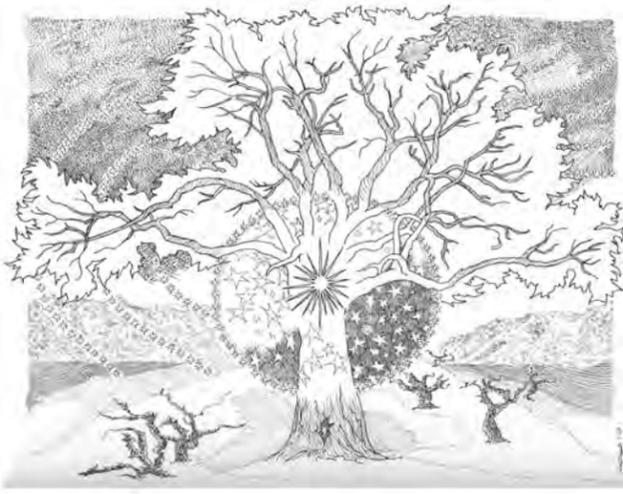
the culture  
many facets  
interesting  
she flourished  
but wondered about the others,  
went explored  
there existed another world out there  
how to meld the two together?

she is here now, then will be gone

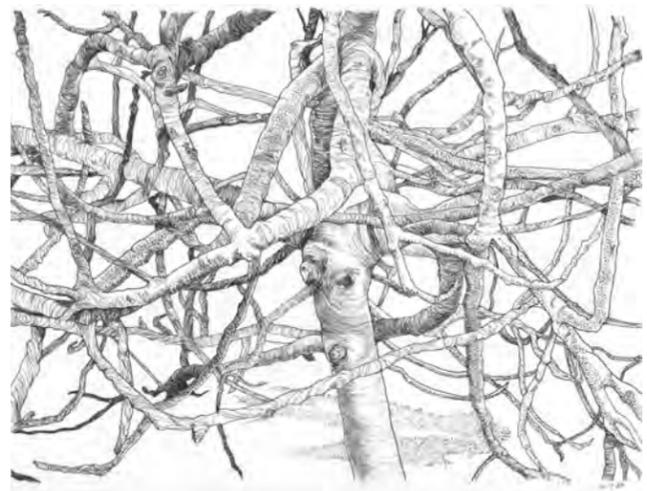
melding like the flour, water and flavoring  
like a bouquet of mixed flowers  
like a box of assorted chocolates  
like a bunch of different dogs  
like the merging of entering bus passengers  
like two souls connecting

she is here now, then will be gone

**Helen Dannenberg's** work can be found in San Francisco City College Forum Magazine, The Noe Valley Voice, publications of Community Living Campaign, Litquake, and Older Writers Laboratory. Previously she used the spoken word in her choreography.



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Photo by Jack Tipple

## Two Poems

By J. Clemente

### FLOWING IN DREAMS

for W.B.S.

I am sleeping  
with the Stars eyes  
wide open  
watching those distant furnaces  
clearing paths to birth

Remembering how your dog Gracie  
swallowed the bluejay whole

How your roses and your  
Redwood hair and moss  
are fertile ground

Connecting root and sky  
with the swift currents  
flowing in dreams.

### THAT BEACH OF STARS

Another tree falls to rest  
dreaming the Palo Santo into  
becoming

There high above where tourmaline  
forms in black rainbows of crystal  
to be discovered and lifted

Folding into your hands with  
gentle strength carressing  
those of another

Slow blinking eyes blue as the waters  
of Capri washing  
that beach of Stars.

**J. Clemente** is the pen name of an artist, editor and seeker of peace, love and understanding. After over 50 years living in San Francisco (sometimes Noe Valley) he now resides in Sausalito with his calico cat Freyja.

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