

The Semaphore

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NORTH
BEACH IN
THE MOVIES



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TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Voice Mail/Hotline: 273-1004. Fax: 255-6499. Web Site: www.thd.org
P.O. Box 330159 • San Francisco, CA 94133

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2003-2005

PRESIDENT: Paul Scott,
26 Darrell Pl., 981-5112, pdscott@
sbcglobal.net

VICE PRESIDENT: Marc Bruno,
15 Nobles Alley, 434-1528,
marcabruno@yahoo.com

RECORDING SEC'Y: Rozell Overmire,
293 Union, 989-3945,
rozell@ureach.com

CORRESPONDING SEC'Y: Mary
Lipian, 1304 Montgomery, 391-5652,
lipianmw@aetna.com

TREASURER: Maya Armour,
231 Greenwich, 986-1474,
mlarmour@pacbell.net

FINANCIAL SEC'Y: Tom Noyes,
432-A Vallejo, 981-8520,
tom@noyesfamily.com

HISTORIAN: Nancy Shanahan,
224 Filbert, 986-7094,
nshan@mindspring.com

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT: Gerry
Crowley, 7 Fielding Place, 781-4201,
gerrycrowley@aol.com

SEMAPHORE STAFF:

EDITOR: Bob McMillan, 624 Filbert,
296-0669, semaphore@thd.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Anna Dow,
624 Filbert St., 296-0669,
anna@filbert.net

COPY EDITOR: Tony Long, 362-8363
alittlechinmusic@yahoo.com

BUSINESS MANAGER: Gail Switzer,
341 Filbert, 788-8667,
gail_switzer@yahoo.com

ARCHIVIST: Rhoda Robinson

TYPESETTING/DESIGN: Chris
Carlsson, Typesetting Etc., 626-2160
ccarlsson@shapingsf.org

DIRECTORS 2002-2004

Kathleen Dooley,
216 Filbert, 433-6932,
info@columbinedesign.com

Joe Butler, 1048 Union St. #19, 956-
5307, fjosephbutler@hotmail.com

Ariel Okamoto, 465 Chestnut St.,
989-2441, bayariel@earthlink.net

Louis Sarto, 300 Lombard, 434-8321
lsarto@sartoassociates.com

DIRECTORS 2003-2005

Mikkel Aaland,
543 Greenwich St., 392-7742,
maaland@cyberbohemia.com

Maxine Schulman,
101 Lombard St., #803W, 981-4042,
BigMaxSF@aol.com

Tony Long, 7 Reno Place, 362-8363,
alittlechinmusic@yahoo.com

Brad Willmore, 31 Alta St., 205-0259,
willmore@earthlink.net

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Cover: You can see a life-sized cutout of Humphrey Bogart in a window of the Malloch Apartments at 1360 Montgomery today, but if you'd been there nearly 60 years ago, you might have bumped into the real Bogie as he was working on the classic noir film, Dark Passage. In it, the Malloch was cast as home to Lauren Bacall. Story pg. 16

The Semaphore is a publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for its members. Articles, except for the summary of Board of Directors' Motions, do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association or its Officers, but are the opinions of the writers of the individual signed articles. The Association can take no responsibility for their content. This membership publication is not to be reprinted or disseminated without written permission.



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EDITOR'S DESK

By Bob McMillan

Though a lot is being said about the proposed condominium development at 701 Lombard, and our grass-roots effort to transform this space across from the North Beach Library into a park, the dispute can be distilled down to one simple question for the neighborhood: Do we want more public space?

That the community has a legitimate interest in this very public section of our Columbus Avenue is beyond dispute. The 701 Lombard "triangle" stands before an important civic institution on the major thoroughfare in North Beach. And the community has had an interest in the land for at least 17 years. That's why

there's been a deed restriction on the land since 1986, which reads, "Applicant shall cooperate with area neighborhood groups if funding becomes available for purchase of the parcel as a park."

That the developers will be fairly recompensed should the city acquire the land via eminent domain (as is now proposed) is also beyond dispute. The triangle was purchased five years ago for \$550,000; the city is offering to pay \$1.8 million for the land, according to the *North Beach Journal*.

District 3 has the smallest percentage of park space of any district in San Francisco, but we probably do the best with what we've got. Our parks may be some of the smallest, but they're probably the most vibrant as well. I'm privileged to witness this each day from my apartment on Washington Square. The early morning Chinese exercisers, the lunchtime picnickers, dog walkers in the early evening, and the late night saxophone soloists—they all make Washington Square an amazing, green center of civic life.

And it doesn't stop there. Just look at the evening rollerblade, soccer, basketball and softball games that go on daily in the Joe DiMaggio playground, and the roaring success of the newly restored bocce courts across the street from 701 Lombard. And let's not forget the amazing community gardens all over the Hill that have helped turn our little community into an international tourist destination.

San Franciscans know what to do with public space. If you want an idea of what 701 Lombard could become, take a walk through our neighborhood parks or the great public spaces of our city and ask yourself, "what would our neighborhood be without them?"

I understand that we do not live in Utopia,

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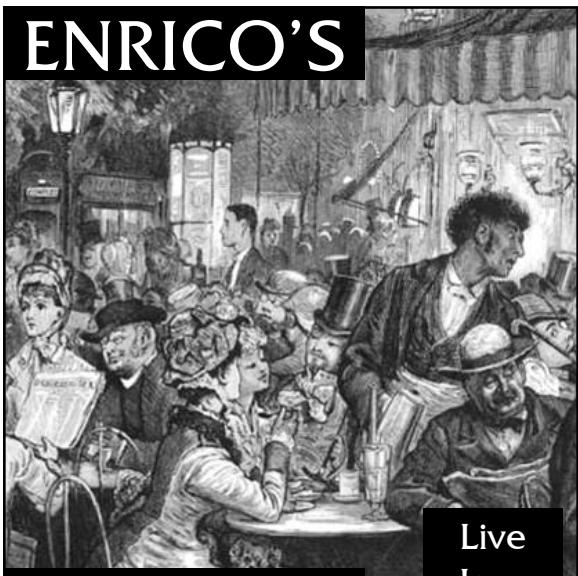
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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Paul Scott

By the time you read this column, the fate of 701 Lombard will in all probability have been decided. (Just in case you have been living in a cave, 701 Lombard refers to the triangle of land right across Mason Street from the North Beach Library.) The Board of Supervisors will have voted up or down (we need 8 out of 11 votes) on whether to acquire the triangle by eminent domain for use as a park, and the Board of Appeals will have decided on THD's appeal of the developers' building permit. You don't need to know the outcome, though, to see already that this is a truly remarkable battle that captures much of our essence. The first line of our bylaws calls for us "to beautify and improve" the neighborhood. For that reason, amongst many others, the Triangle has captured our imagination and we have risen up in support.

But we face no mean opposition here. The developers are aligned with Joe O'Donahue's Residential Builder's Association, and they have insider Jim Rueben as their counsel. They are fighting back with unprecedented resources and fervor. Hit pieces are raining down from the *Independent*, the *Examiner*, and even, oddly enough, non-English speaking workers toting sandwich boards and distributing flyers. While both local papers, the *North Beach Journal* and *North Beach Beat*, have come out strongly in favor of the park with principled explanations as to why, the Chronicle has not yet weighed in, and



there is a real risk that the substantive issues will be lost in a swirl of allegations and counter-allegations. What I am hoping, perhaps naively, is that the ultimate decision will be made based on principle – i.e., what our grandchildren will think of the decision 50 years from now – and not based on influence. We are working hard towards that end, but whether that actually occurs will provide a lesson, sweet or bitter, that we will all be drawing at the time you read this piece. See Julie Christensen's article on page 8 for more.

Movie Night at Washington Square

On a lighter note, we also will have learned some valuable lessons from showing our first outdoor movie in Washington Square Park. After much discussion with the City and local neighborhood groups, the event was set for October 11, 2003. The main feature is Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," and it is to be preceded by a showcase of trailers produced by local award winning filmmakers and others, along with the requisite cartoon for kids.

Two local nonprofits are working with THD to co-sponsor the event: North Beach Citizens, a community resource for the homeless, and the San Francisco Neighborhood Theater Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve neighborhood theaters in San Francisco. Private sponsorship is also being provided by Moose's and Rogue Ales.

In advance of planning the event, THD worked with Rec & Park officials to place restrictions on the number of amplified events at Washington Square, given concerns expressed by neighbors about excessive noise. With Rec &

continued on p. 7

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued*

Park now working to limit the Square's amplified permits to 12 per year, THD simply took one of the available slots for this event, which we are hoping might become a tradition. Your thoughts on how it came out would be welcomed.

Corner Store

In an effort to combine the best of technology and community, there are plans afoot to create a bulletin-board for North Beach on the THD website. The idea would be to create a place on the Web for people in North Beach to post notices just as they would at the corner store. Items for sale, babysitters needed, places for rent, etc. are the types of things that could be listed. New board member Mikkel Aaland is taking the lead role in putting this together. Anyone who has seen his work before knows the results are certain to be great. To get in contact with Mikkel about this, drop him an email at maaland@cyberbohemia.com.

Giants Game

We organized our first visit to Pac Bell Park for THD members in August, and the event was a huge success. Over 60 people attended to watch Barry Bonds blast a homer in the bottom of the 10th to win the game for the home team. Bonhomie was rampant. Most participants left with t-shirts, banners, or other souvenirs courtesy of Jack Bair, general counsel for

the Giants, who came by for a visit during the game. There is already demand for a return trip to the ballpark.

Piers 27-31

We are continuing to follow development at Piers 27-31, which I wrote about in the last *Semaphore*. Since then, Mills has expressed some reservations about whether the 50,000 square feet of retail recently added to the project can be returned to recreation space. In my view, failing to do so would be completely unacceptable. This message has been clearly communicated to Mills, and they have promised once again to report back on whether they are prepared to give 100 percent support to reverting the 50,000 square feet of space to recreation. There are still other important issues concerning the project's viability, but it's important for THD to get an answer on this question, so that we can at least know the basics of what we are being asked to accept.

In the meantime, THD is also making efforts to contact other groups in the North East Waterfront area, including a new group calling themselves Citizens to Save the Waterfront, so that we can coordinate our response, as appropriate, to the final version of this project. More to come on this.



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The Green Report

By Julianne M. Christensen, Parks & Trees Committee

Ours was one of the first San Francisco neighborhoods, and it was the first neighborhood rebuilt after the 1906 quake and fire. It has always been densely built and thickly populated. Our crush is relieved by Washington Square, in part because San Francisco's first mayor, John Geary, believed in the wisdom and value of setting aside public greens. We have Pioneer Park because private citizens believed it should be held open for all to enjoy. But, in the mid 20th century, while free-ways were proposed for the Marina Green and the Golden Gate Park Panhandle, and high-rises sprouted on the City's hills, we narrowly avoided efforts to turn Washington Square into a parking garage.

Our neighborhood is at a turning point of

similar magnitude. In the coming months, the City will determine if the triangle bounded by Columbus, Lombard and Mason gets used for a dense nine-condo development or as public space.

Do we need more open space?

The district's typical neighborhood has over 50,000 residents per square mile. We don't have yards. We can't even play in the street. Many in the neighborhood don't have cars and can't afford to join the Bay Club. Our apartments are tiny. For many neighbors, our public space serves not only as back and front yard, but as living room and den. In North Beach, our open spaces are the core of life.

Never plan to set foot in our parks? Chances are very good you still benefit from them. Open space relieves the pressure of density with light and air. And kids who spend time in libraries and recreation centers are less likely to be out dragging the streets and causing you trouble. Numerous urban studies prove that your property becomes more valuable based on its proximity to attractive parks and recreation facilities. Businesses thrive near parks. Neighborhoods gain identity and pride.

What's the objective? Besides more green and open space?

One goal is more park land to offset expansion of the North Beach Library: Our branch is reported to be the second most heavily used neighborhood library in San Francisco. We desperately need more of everything – more books, more computers, more movies and CDs, more space for study carrels and storytelling and periodicals. But the library cannot grow in any direction without encroaching on the playground. The City is prepared to spend millions for seismic upgrades and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, but usable library space will remain little

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continued on next page

Green Report *cont'd.*

more than half of the ideal size.

Another goal is the upgrading of the adjacent stretch of Columbus Avenue: The Triangle's parking lot has been a business-killer for decades. But stand on the southeast corner of Columbus and Lombard and look back at the views of Coit Tower, Telegraph Hill and the Transamerica Pyramid. The scrappy Triangle, incorporated into North Beach Playground, could be a wonderful, welcoming milestone. It will, and should, always have a different character from Washington Square. But, like that green space, it could be a great backdrop for cafés, restaurants, and retail establishments.

Is this a sneak attack?

The City tried to buy the land in 1955. Neighbors tried again in 1985 (as they fought efforts to install a big, cantilevered, lighted billboard on the site). Deed restrictions were placed on the property that year, including one giving priority to use of the land as public park. These must have shown up in the title search. Blindsided? The first hint we got of the massive changes afoot was last year's notice of permit application. The THD Planning and Zoning Committee immediately talked with the developers and notified the City of their concerns with the project's bulk and height. The THD Parks and Trees Committee encouraged the Library and the city's Recreation & Parks Department staff to meet with the developers to negotiate purchase of the property or joint ventures that would allow some public use of the space. The developers were alerted to our issues as soon as we became aware of their plans.

Is it worth the cost and struggle?

City documents from the 1910s, the '20s, the '40s, the '50s and the 70's all moan about the density, the crazy topography, and the high cost of acquiring property in North Beach. The city decided to amass land for the North Beach

Playground in 1903, but a decade passed before it snagged the final parcel. It took years to find a site for the Carnegie-funded library on Powell Street that finally opened in the 1920s. The Library Commission and Board of Supervisors wanted to spend \$60,000 to buy the Triangle in 1955, but Mayor Christopher thought the land was too expensive.

A few things are certain: Land in North Beach will likely never become cheaper or more plentiful. We need more programs for seniors as our population gets proportionally older. We want to keep kids and families. And what of economic diversity? Public amenities help ensure a vibrant, varied neighborhood. Our public spaces are where we become a neighborhood in the truest sense.

Many discussions on this issue have centered on personalities and grudges and power struggles. To me, it is about kids, and families and grandparents, and the need for fresh air and exercise and trees, and about what kind of neighborhood we want to live in, and what kind of place this will be in the future. Barring major calamity, the convergence of the library renovation and the unoccupied Triangle may never happen again, at least not in this century. **Can we afford to do this?** Well, can we afford NOT to?



Developers want to turn the parking lot at the corner of Columbus & Lombard into a condominium project. THD believes a park would be a better idea.

PHOTO BY ANNA DOW

Planning and Zoning Committee Report

By the Planning & Zoning Committee

The P&Z committee is trying out a new format for its quarterly report this issue. Rather than providing our usual exhaustive list of every single development in North Beach and the waterfront, we've decided instead to focus on some of the most significant developments in the neighborhood. We hope this new format will draw more attention to the truly important development issues on and around the Hill. If you're interested in finding out more about planning and zoning issues in the neighborhood, please feel free to contact Jeanne Milligan for more information on what you can do to help. Her e-mail address is: jeanne_m@pacbell.net.

1. 129 Alta

The owners are proposing significant alterations to this 1902 building that was included as a historic building in the original Telegraph Hill Historic District. Although some modifications have been made to it since 1902, the building still retains many of its original window openings, its roof line and cottage form which we seek to preserve. Members of the P&Z Committee have met with the owners and project architect to encourage consideration of a design that will add additional space to the building while being sensitive to its historic character.

continued on next page

Board of Directors: Motions Passed

June: No Motions

July

Motion: "THD designates \$400 to the Co-chairpersons of the Planning and Zoning Committee to appeal the Determination of the San Francisco Zoning Administrator with regards to the 701 Lombard Street Project should the Co-chairpersons with the assistance of their Committee establish a legitimate and reasonable basis on which to appeal."

Motion: "To donate \$1,000 to S.F. Clean City Coalition to be used for the North Beach

Citizen's Street Sweeping Program. We will work toward encouraging our members to support this program"

Motion: "In light of concerns regarding parking, THD will communicate to Landmark Education that THD is opposed to Landmark occupying 1355 Sansome unless Landmark can guarantee that there will be no impact on street parking."

August

Motion: "That THD write a letter to appropriate San Francisco City officials requesting that the City acquire the triangular parcel of land commonly known as '701 Lombard Street' (Block 74, Lot 1 on official City maps) for purposes of a park, in order to expand the North Beach Playground."

Motion: That the Telegraph Hill Dwellers sign the fiscal sponsorship grant agreement with the North East San Francisco Conservancy for the benefit of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers Oral History Project.



PLANNING AND ZONING

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2. Cable Car Turnaround (Bay & Taylor)

A public process has been underway for designing a new cable car turnaround structure at the Taylor terminus as a part of the rebuilding of North Beach Place public housing project. Bridge Housing Corporation, the non-profit housing developer for the project, has obtained a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to hire a landscape architect to develop a design proposal to be presented to MTC in the fall with a request for funding to implement the project. The currently proposed design is for an open, see-through, light and airy structure consistent with existing Muni F Line stops along the Wharf and the Embarcadero. THD asked for more seating and for more cover while passengers are waiting in line for a cable car. THD also

asked that attention be given to the removal or rearrangement of the 17 news racks that currently exist at the site and that the five trash receptacles be consolidated. THD also suggested that amenities be incorporated to make the site warmer and more welcoming to visitors and residents, including flower baskets, which can utilize inexpensive drip irrigation. THD has further requested that a publicly noticed meeting be held on site in the spring to review the design proposals.

3. 701 Lombard Street (triangular parking lot)

**bounded by Columbus, Lombard and Mason
across from the North Beach Pool**

Following a lengthy and careful review of the plans for a proposed four-story, nine-unit condominium building on this 4,000-square foot, very prominent site, THD

continued on next page

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PLANNING AND ZONING

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filed a request that the Planning Commission take Discretionary Review (DR) of this project. A DR is a power which the Planning Commission has to review a project and to modify it even though it may meet the technical requirements of the Planning Code. This was the first time in three years that THD took this step, as our Planning & Zoning Committee has been successful in working cooperatively with project sponsors in forging compromises to reduce or eliminate negative effects on our neighborhood. In this case, failing such attempts, THD asked the Planning Commission to consider requiring changes to this project to address the following concerns: (1) The actual height of the building, as proposed, and including all of its roof top features, would be out of scale with the nearby buildings on Columbus Avenue, Mason and Lombard Streets which average 32 feet to the tops of their cornices; (2) The mass of the building would block existing views of Coit Tower, Telegraph Hill and Sts. Peter and Paul from

Columbus Avenue as one proceeds into North Beach from the waterfront, and likewise would block views of Russian Hill from the North Beach Playground; (3) The proposal, which includes two very small commercial spaces (385 sq. ft. and 426 sq. ft.) at the Columbus Avenue building corners, is inconsistent with the North Beach Commercial District ordinance which requires a continuous retail presence at street level on Columbus Avenue; and (4) The structure as proposed would cast additional shading on the North Beach Playground, particularly on the tennis courts, bocce courts and the library. At the June 26 Planning Commission meeting, despite a strong showing of support for the DR, the commission upheld the sponsors' proposed project. THD has appealed both the zoning administrator's position regarding the way the height measurement is taken on this site and the variance granted to developers relieving them of the requirement to provide open space in the project. As we write this, the hearing for both of these issues is scheduled to be held before the Board of Permit Appeals on Oct. 8 at 5 p.m. In a separate neighborhood-wide effort, there is now a petition

underway to urge the City's to acquire the triangle lot for park purposes in connection with the adjacent North Beach Playground. (See stories on pg. 8 and 18 —Ed.)

4. 817 Columbus Ave.

A project approved by the Planning Commission in 1998 is now underway to replace the single story building in which the Doo



701 Lombard. The parking lot that could become a park.

continued on next page

PLANNING AND ZONING

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Wash was located, with a three-story structure consisting of two residential floors (6 units) over ground floor commercial. As approved by the Planning Commission in 1998, the building will not exceed the 40-foot height limit and will retain significant commercial space (3,500 sq. feet total) on the ground



576 Green Street. Site of a proposed cigar club.

floor. Parking will be located below grade, and common open space will be located on the roof. THD is examining the final plans to ensure that the new building will be built in accordance with the plans THD reviewed in 1998.

5. 1356 Grant at Green

The owners of the North Beach video store are proposing to open a Thai restaurant in a portion of the space currently occupied by the video store, which will require the owners to obtain a Conditional Use Authorization from the Planning Commission in order to convert retail use to restaurant use. As originally proposed, the plans called for over half of the current space to be converted to restaurant use. THD recommended decreasing the size of the restaurant so that the remaining non-restaurant space would be large enough for a viable commercial use. The owners agreed to alter their plans in this regard, and, as a result, the original retail space (once occupied by Panama Canal Ravioli Factory) will be restored to its original size.

6. 510 Union St.

The Planning Commission approved a Conditional Use Authorization for the conversion of this long-empty space (once occupied by the Cafe Malvina) to restaurant use—a proposed Argentinian restaurant. The restaurant would serve only dinners when it first opened and would have a beer and wine license. Minor changes to decor are also proposed.

7. 576 Green St.

The leasee proposes to open a Cigar Club in basement of this building. Because the club would be completely owner run, the state's anti-smoking

HELP THE 'HOOD *Shop Locally*

PLANNING AND ZONING

continued from previous page

laws do not appear to be issue, and the proposal has the support of the police department. It will also require a Conditional Use Authorization for a bar.

8. 1402 Grant Ave.

An application for a Conditional Use Authorization has been filed for a proposed new small self-service restaurant at the location of the old North End Caffe location. The new lessee plans to serve Russian food and will also seek an ABC license to serve beer and wine only. Construction work has begun on the cafe.

9. 1839-1841 Stockton

A new four-story, two-apartment building has been proposed for the front portion this lot across from the fire station. Although there is an existing structure on the rear of the lot, the owner had requested a variance from the city's rear yard requirements to extend the new structure into the rear yard by 9.5 feet. THD opposed this request for a variance as unnecessary and because it would impact the light and air of other properties. The variance was denied. Revised building plans will be reviewed by THD.

10. Amendments to NE Waterfront Historic District Ordinance

Resulting from the approval by the Landmarks Board of the addition of several new illuminated signs to buildings in the NE Waterfront Historic District, THD's Historic District Subcommittee proposed an amendment to the Northeast Waterfront Historic District ordinance to clarify and further limit the regulations on signage within the historic district. This matter has been scheduled for hearing at the Planning Commission, its first stop before heading to the Land Use Committee of the Board of Supervisors.

11. Proposed Northern Waterfront National Register Historic District.

With THD's active support, the Port is nearing completion of the National Register nomination of its properties along the northern waterfront (from Pier 45 to 48).

The nomination is scheduled to be presented to the Port Commission in early November and will then be presented to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). THD plans to hold informational meetings and presentations of the historic nomination to its members at an event to be announced.

12. Piers 27-31—Mixed Use Recreation Project

In April 2003 the Port initiated review by the State Lands Commission of the project's consistency with the public trust. Subsequently, the attorney general issued an opinion finding several features of the project non-compliant. A deal based on transferring some commercial recreation square footage to additional office and retail use was put together in order to gain State Lands approval of the project at its June 2nd meeting. Despite widespread opposition to these changes, Mills has declined to work with the community to find ways to add more trust compliant recreation. While these and other substantial issues regarding the programming of the site remain unresolved, the project is proceeding through the BCDC and Port design review. Work continues on the draft Environmental Impact Report for this project. THD has requested that the following issues be addressed in the EIR: the inconsistency of the project with the Port's official Waterfront Land Use Plan and the database used for its EIR, issues of parking, traffic, urban design, noise, nighttime activities and lighting as well as the impact of the proposed office, retail and restaurant uses on existing Port and neighborhood businesses.

Correction

Due to a reporting error, a P&Z item on pg. 12 of the Autumn 2003 Semaphore incorrectly identified 1445 Montgomery St. as the site of a proposed chairlift addition. The correct address for this proposed addition is 1451 Montgomery.



The Oral History Committee needs a volunteer with a computer

and typing skills to transcribe audio-taped interviews.

Please call Audrey at 391-1792

THD volunteers at work



(above) Joan Wood (left) and Gail Switzer at the THD booth during this year's Upper Grant Avenue Fall Art Fair.

(right) Suzanne Nelson directs traffic at the Upper Grant Avenue Fall Art Fair.



The Hill in Time Capsule Celluloid

By Art Peterson

"Where to?" the cabbie asks Robert Mitchum in the classic 1947 noir film "Out of the Past."

"Telegraph Hill," Mitchum replies.

"You have some bad luck?" the cabbie wonders.

While most of us who live here in real life consider ourselves lucky to have a Telegraph Hill address, those who have resided on the movie version of the hill have not always been so fortunate. Their bad luck, however, may be our good luck, as their entanglements are often set against a time capsule view of earlier times in the neighborhood.

Here's a look at just a few films that have helped immortalize our little piece of San Francisco on the silver screen.

The House on Telegraph Hill (1951)

The only feature film with the name our neighborhood in its title, the "House on Telegraph Hill" provides vintage footage of upper Montgomery Street circa 1950. The unlucky Valentina Cortesa, a World War II concentration camp survivor, has, by hook or crook, become the owner of a mansion on the north end of Montgomery Street, at the very spot Julius Castle is (and was) located. Through the magic of special effects, however, the castle has been replaced by an imposing Victorian, part Presidio Heights, part Addams family, but not a style native to our locale

The reason Valentina Coretesa is unlucky is that her husband, Richard Basehart, is trying to murder her so he can come into possession of her Bay view digs. One of his diabolical schemes



1227 Montgomery. Where Donald Sutherland seeks refuge from the pod people in the 1978 remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers."

involves tampering with the brakes on her car, the result being what must be one of the first (of dozens) San Francisco out-of-control auto sequences. Coretesa's vehicle careens over the area around Montgomery and Union in a sequence of shots that makes little geographical sense. The auto finally flips over when it hits a pile of dirt at the corner of Montgomery and Montague Place, perhaps the most serious traffic mishap ever to occur at that quiet intersection.

In real life Cortesa and Basehart seem to have gotten along just fine; they married a year after completion of the film.

Dark Passage (1947)

Humphrey Bogart, as Vincent Foster, has had a streak of bad luck that, at the beginning of "Dark Passage," has landed him in San Quentin, convicted of a murder he didn't commit. Escaping from Quentin, his luck abruptly changes as he is picked up on a Marin backroad by Lauren Bacall who, despite her occupation as an "amateur landscape painter," is able to afford the upscale rent of the classic moderne Malloch Apartments at 1360 Montgomery.

Suddenly ensconced amid Noel Coward chic, Foster — who we have not yet seen because the film has been shot from his point of view — is nevertheless plagued by the correct suspicion that he is being watched by some bad guys camped out on the upper side of Montgomery Street. He decides to leave the neighborhood and contract for some plastic surgery that will make him look more like, well, Humphrey Bogart. After the successful operation, Bogart, unfortunately, is dropped off at the bottom of (as opposed to the top of) the Filbert Steps. Hobbling up the steps toward Montgomery, he runs out of steam in front of 228 Filbert, uttering words familiar to legions of step climbers: "Got to keep climbing." He manages to crawl and scratch his way the 50

yards, into the frosted glass elevator on Montgomery Street that transports him to Bacall's waiting arms.

During the filming of "Dark Passage" the Battling Bogarts, as the off-screen married couple was known in the tabloids, would lick each other's wounds in the curtained booth off the main dining room in the Shadows Restaurant across the street from 1360 Montgomery. The Shadows, years later, became Dalla Torre and now, sadly, sits empty.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978)

Hill dwellers go to great lengths to preserve the park-like environment where they live, but in "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" Donald Sutherland gets a quick and dirty lesson on the down side of cultivating flora. Standing on his back porch at 1227 Montgomery, he and Leonard Nimoy converse, their bodies framing the centrally placed phallic tower of the Transamerica Building. (Transamerica at this time was owned United Artists, the company that produced the film. The building becomes a visual motif throughout the movie, perhaps generating the most dramatic example of product placement in movie history.)

Sutherland comes to understand that the pod people are on the march, eager to transform him and his little band of survivors into mindless automatons, just like them. In an effort to save themselves, the still hearty crew leaves the house, takes off over Castle Street, then down the Filbert Steps, past the suspiciously pod-like vegetation of the Grace Merchant Gardens, to the security of Pier 33. But, alas, it's all wasted energy. Predictably, the pods win.

As all who live here know, these films represent only a page from the bulky catalogue of films made on the hill. There was, for instance, "Petula" (1968), where the high ceilings of George C. Scott's swinging bachelor pad at 307 Filbert pro-

From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

by Aaron Peskin

A great community controversy. People are talking about it in the cafes. A thousand people have signed petitions available in various neighborhood businesses. The North Beach Chamber of Commerce is on one side, the Telegraph Hill Dwellers on the other; a new neighborhood organization has been formed because of it. Shall we have a park or a condominium development? Rumors. Accusations. Everyone seems to have an opinion or a theory.

The issue: the future use of "The Triangle" parking lot on Columbus Avenue. This site, a triangular lot bounded by Columbus Avenue, Lombard and Mason streets, sits immediately across Mason from Joe DiMaggio/North Beach Playground, the North Beach Library, pool and bocce ball courts. Whatever the outcome it will have an impact on the northeast corner of our city for years to come.

As is often the case in this dense, historic city, "The Triangle" has been a flash point in the debate about open space and community planning in North Beach for over a half century. Here's a brief history of the land at the root of this controversy: In the 1920s, San Francisco qualified for funds from the Carnegie Institute to construct two new libraries: the Presidio and North Beach branches. The latter, built at Powell and Washington streets far from the traditional heart of the neighborhood, eventually became the Chinatown Branch (and was recently declared as a city landmark by the Board of Supervisors).

By the mid 1940's, after the end of the Second World War, pressure mounted on the city to build a library closer to the center of North Beach. The city began searching for a suitable location in 1945, but due to the scarcity of available land in the neighborhood, the search continued for 10 long years.

By 1955, the Library Commission had become extremely interested in The Triangle and convinced the Board of Supervisors to allocate \$60,000 to purchase the site and design a new facility there. At that time the site was occupied by a Standard Oil gas station.



However, when George Christopher became mayor in 1956, he ignored the will of the Commission and rescinded the \$60,000. Christopher argued the city should save money by building the library on existing parkland (the same mentality in vogue in those days often resulted in using parks to build freeways, as was proposed for the Golden Gate Park Panhandle).

Following several more unsuccessful site selections (including one on Washington Square Park at the location of the current post office), Christopher gave the Library Commission an ultimatum: Build the library on the playground or lose the funding all together.

Fast-forward nearly 50 years. The North Beach Branch Library is one of the most heavily utilized in San Francisco. The playground, tennis courts, swimming pool and bocce ball courts are a vibrant heart for neighborhood recreation. Thanks to a concerted effort by neighborhood activists, the North Beach pool is on the verge of being rebuilt, neighborhood library bond money is slated for retrofitting and refurbishing the library, and the city continues to be interested in acquiring The Triangle to expand Joe DiMaggio Playground. Just a year ago, when two local developers first proposed a condominium project for The Triangle (currently an unsightly parking lot), the Recreation and Parks Department made an offer to purchase the property for fair market value. The offer was flatly refused.

While I have a longstanding record of supporting housing development (such as the North Beach housing project currently under construction, the recently completed Malt Factory project and the proposed new housing at Broadway and Battery), the development proposal for The Triangle is troubling to me for a number of reasons.

First, there is the long history of city interest and attempts to acquire the land for public purposes. Second, a special restriction was recorded on the property's title in 1984 (one of the many times public acquisition was proposed) requiring the owner to sell the property for open space if city funds became available to purchase the land. Third, the fact is that the proposed development will shade the existing North Beach play-

SUPERVISOR PESKIN *cont'd from page 18*

ground, particularly the bocce ball and tennis courts, by as much as an additional hour and a half.

Also, the view corridors in this area are among the best known and most visited in San Francisco. I am concerned that the mass of the building would block existing views of Coit Tower, Telegraph Hill and Saints Peter and Paul from Columbus Avenue as one proceeds into North Beach from the Waterfront. I am equally concerned about views of Russian Hill from the North Beach Playground being obscured.

Another major concern is the use of measurement techniques for height and bulk that would allow the developers to skirt local zoning limits on size. While the site is zoned for a 40-foot height limit, by using questionable measurement techniques the developers have attempted to sidestep the height requirement and build a project out of step with the character with other structures in North Beach. The project sponsor's method of measurement exploits the slope of the site to create a building that is actually as much as 50 feet high near its northwest corner and towers up to nearly 60 feet with rooftop additions.

The Recreation and Parks Department remains interested in acquiring the land on behalf of the community to extend the North Beach Playground across Mason Street and increase the scarce open space in our neighborhood. District 3, the city's densest, has the least amount of open space per capita of any district in the City.

Proponents of the development make a number of arguments - some legitimate, some preposterous. One argument is that the developers, after having invested significant sums of money to purchase the land and obtain building approvals, are now being blindsided by the community's opposition.

I counter that the city/community interest in acquiring the property has spanned a half a century. In fact, the developers had notice when they acquired the property that the community intended the land to be acquired for a park and, most importantly, the city would pay fair market value for the property.

Another argument is that this block might benefit from a project that would create a consistent pattern of development along Columbus Avenue and tie the physical fabric of the area together. Indeed, if this was a

better designed project that could be true, but expanding the park will create a vibrant new center on Columbus and may well share the ambiance that makes Washington Square one of the city's great parks.

As to the contention that open space exacerbates the homeless problems, I respectfully disagree. Washington Square is one of the crown jewels of the neighborhood park system and I firmly believe that expansion of the North Beach Playground will only improve the quality of this community.

Finally, there are those who believe that a certain city supervisor is manipulating the system to expand a neighborhood park. My response: I ran for public office to fight for what I believe to be the public interest. An individual supervisor has limited sway over the Recreation and Parks Department and its policy decisions. The Department answers to a commission created in the City Charter that serves at the pleasure of the mayor.

I support seeing The Triangle become a park because it represents a positive benefit for the North Beach community. The Department supports it because it is a sound public policy they have pursued for more than a half a century.

While my first concern with this project was its impact on the immediate surroundings, the more I learned about The Triangle the more I realized we weren't just facing another dispute between developers and neighbors. Rather, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to right a mistake made by city leaders almost a half century ago and to improve the quality of life for our residents for generations.

I am grateful to the many community leaders, citizens and activists for your hard work and perseverance in advancing this issue. I look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts on this and other issues. And, as always, please be in touch with my office as you have questions or concerns with the neighborhood or the city: 554-7450 or aaron.peskin@sfgov.org. See you around the neighborhood.



Movies on Telegraph Hill

continued from page 17

vided catnip for the new-wavish camera antics of director Richard Lester. There was the filming of "Pal Joey" (1957) that, for a day, transformed Coit Tower into the mansion of socialite Mrs. Vera Simpson (Rita Hayworth). Much to the chagrin of the tourist hordes denied access to the tower, that filming took place on Easter Sunday.

These memorable films may seem like giants of quality in contrast to "The Hulk" (2002) and others in the current crop of movies with Telegraph Hill footage. But consider this: Twenty years from now, we will be able to pick up the video of the unfortunate "40 Days and 40 Nights" (2000), check out images of the intersection of Grant and Vallejo, and, if all goes well, have hard evidence that the Caffé Trieste has not changed a whit.



PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

By Maxine Schulman

The summer's social events were fun and well-attended.

Our July dinner at Il Fornaio, with the guest speaker, Dr. Leonard Shlain, was both informative and entertaining.

In August, we all had a chance to see Barry hit a game-winning home run. I hope that seeing the Giants win will become a yearly event!

September means our annual outing to the San Francisco Symphony, coupled with the THD's picnic at Coit Tower, and in October we're planning an open-air screening of the Film Vertigo in Washington Square. This is scheduled for October 11, the day before our Columbus Day lunch.

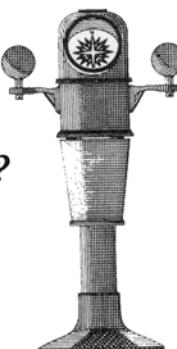
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North Beach Citizens Update

By Kristie Fairchild

In our first three years, North Beach Citizens has worked hard with the community to improve the standard of living for homeless and at-risk individuals.

Many have found work, homes, recovery, human kindness, friendship and a sense of pride they never knew existed. We have also helped har-

ness the energy and creativity of our diverse community to find some solutions to one of the most complex social problems in our city and nation. Since coming on board as the new executive director in June, I have continued with the core program as well as set out to start some new approaches.

In July, Francis Ford Coppola ran a theater workshop for 25 clients. The players gave the per-

Upcoming North Beach Citizen Events

Fancis Ford Coppola invites the neighborhood to the North Beach Citizens Town Meeting 620 Filbert Street/Parish Center

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In the 19th century, Telegraph Hill was a lookout spot. A man stood at the top and watched for ships arriving through the Golden Gate. He used semaphore signals to spell out ships' names to the people below who were waiting for goods and mail. Neighbors who formed Telegraph Hill Dwellers in 1954 named their newsletter to salute this early use of the Hill.

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NORTH BEACH CITIZENS

continued from previous page

formance of their lives for this great director. One of the funniest segments of the workshop was when Francis put people on the spot to act as one of the mayoral candidates, asking them to describe their position on homelessness. The group then voted the Angela Alioto candidate into office.

Recently, a group of the clients have donated their time to be good citizens to the entire community. We voluntarily cleaned the bocce courts, helped clean up at the block party sponsored by NBN and assisted with the 9/11 memorial in Washington Square.

And though our year-old North Beach Street Beautification program continues to be successful, our city funding has recently been cut. We are encouraging the merchants and community to help us continue this important program. The Street Beautification program promotes self-reliance, nurturing potential, and provides dignity to our clients at North Beach Citizens.

One of our clients, Masa Hirayama, has gone

onto City College to be educated as a drug/alcohol counselor. The board of directors has decided to start a scholarship fund for clients who are ready to make this commitment. Masa continues to volunteer his time at North Beach Citizens. He is an excel-

lent role model for the other clients.

Since June, nine clients have gone into rehab, two have found housing, two have passed away, and 15 people have been employed stuffing envelopes and assisting with the North Beach Street Beautification program.

North Beach Citizens will be setting up an art show at Live Worms on upper Grant Avenue in November. We are going to show photographs, writing and sculpture completed by the clients. The mission is to have a show which gives the public an inside look at the homeless in their neighborhood, to relay the humor and tragedy in their everyday existence.

Fred Wickham has volunteered his time to run a writer's workshop every Wednesday with our organization. Each participant is encouraged to bring a story and then read it aloud for comment. Kim Lamont, a client and participant, says, "This program has given me confidence in my writing and an opportunity to discuss different styles of writing."

North Beach Citizens is a unique grassroots community center for the homeless and at-risk living in North Beach. We strive to become a model for other neighborhoods, and others are clearly taking notice of our progress. The Sunset district and the Clean City Coalition, for example, have used us as a model of a successful program.

I am proud to be part of this organization. I encourage the community to embrace NBC through volunteering their time to help: Make food bank runs, advocate for clients during appointments with outside services, drive to pick up bread donations in Potrero Hill, become a work readiness mentor, make a breakfast or lunch for 20 people once a month, or be an in-kind contribution organizer. All donations are welcome to keep the momentum of this model program functioning in these economic times.

Kristie Fairchild is Executive Director of North Beach Citizens. She can be reached at 772-0918



Ray Crain, Theresa Andrews, and Robert Fisher of the North Beach Citizens clean up North Beach.

Introducing Friends of North Beach

By Marc Bruno

As some of you may already know, there is a new neighborhood association in North Beach.

The formation of the group, Friends of North Beach, is an outgrowth of the experiences of several THD and non-THD members advocating the creation of a City park on the Triangle across from the North Beach Library.

As many of you know, this property was for many years a gas station and is currently used as a paid parking lot. What is the best use of this property when (don't say "if") it becomes a park?

How about a reading park for kids only open during library hours? Or what about an annex for the adjacent North Beach Playground? Or a rose garden for lunching seniors from nearby Tel-Hi Neighborhood Center? We've heard these and other suggestions as we spent the summer gather-

ing over 1,000 signatures in favor of the park. Friends of North Beach hopes to give these many diverse opinions a place at the table after the park is established.

Several of my THD friends familiar with the founding of the new group have asked me whether or not it would interfere with the work of THD, or in any way compete with the older organization. The answer to both questions is a resounding "No."

Perhaps many of you are familiar with the outstanding work of Dorothy Erskine, a Telegraph Hill native and North Beach activist, whose work led to the founding of THD. During a long and active life filled with a non-stop commitment to parks and open space, Erskine founded over 15 groups, associations and park-related clubs to strengthen

continued on page 24

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O'REILLY'S

Friends of North Beach

continued from p. 23

and broaden the message for San Franciscans committed to making the city green.

By offering her public a panoply of political choices and levels of commitment, Erskine's many organizations proved to the nay-sayers of her day that citizens of every ethnicity, economic category and from every section of the City were willing to advocate for the creation of new parks and a healthy environment.

Today, no less than in the past, the voices in favor of parks are many, and THD is one of the most important ones in our neighborhood. Of the people who signed the petition in favor of the park on the Triangle, over 200 are THD members. But that still leaves many who, for whatever reason, do not belong to THD and yet, in this instance, adhere to the THD message.

Friends of North Beach adheres to that message as well. We echo the THD mandate, spelled out in the by-laws, but with a North Beach twist: "To beautify and improve Telegraph Hill [read North Beach]; to encourage a friendly association among the Hill [read Beach] residents; to protect the basic character, building scale and open space of the Hill [Beach] against increased density and traffic; to perpetuate the historical traditions of the Hill's [North Beach's] place in San Francisco history."

And there are two other differences as well, differences which we believe will open the door to additional voices and in so doing strengthen the message for more open-space in the Little City.

First, Friends of North Beach is an advocacy group rather than a membership organization. There are no dues and as a consequence we expect — and hope — our membership to be an ever-changing reflection of our neighbors' commitment on an issue-by-issue basis.

One could easily imagine a mother and father

whose first language is not English participating in a discussion on the planning of the North Beach Library — because their kids use it — and then those same parents returning to their private lives and never participating again. They simply want to be good parents, perhaps the greatest contribution to the integrity and long-term growth of the neighborhood.

A second difference, and another one which we believe makes it easy for people to participate, is this: We recognize no voting restrictions based on geographic boundaries. Everyone is invited to attend and participate so long as they adhere to our basic goal, our commitment to open-space, and we invite non-North Beachers to join as well.

"Where does our neighborhood begin, and where does it end?" As anyone who has ever participated in local politics knows, this is a frequently asked but usually unanswerable question.

"Friends of North Beach" answers it this way: "Are you a former Oklahoman now living in Paris who once passed through North Beach, stopped in at Columbine Design and bought an exotic flower for a waitress at Tosca's? If so, and if you if you love the City as we do, we'll help you find a way to contribute."

Two anecdotes you might find interesting: As last year's nominations committee chairman, I was present when four of the 21 potential nominees we interviewed for the THD board told us point blank: "You know, not everyone can easily pay the THD dues. Some of us have kids, and we're also renters, so in our lives it seems like an extraneous expense."

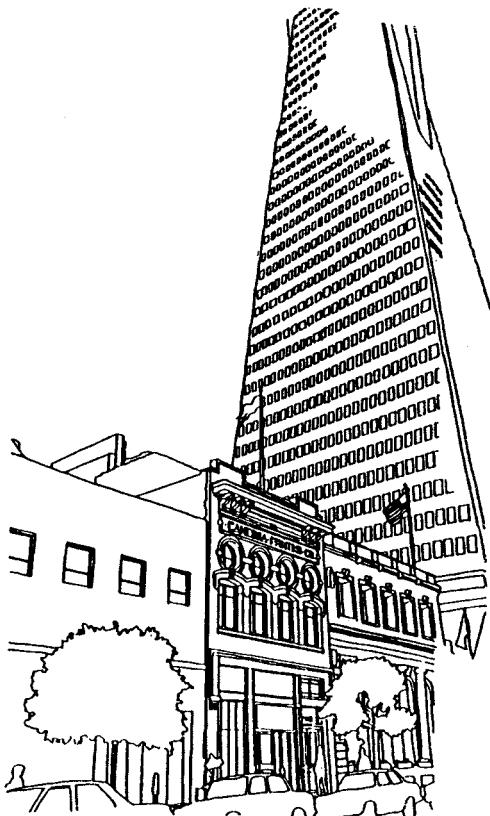
While THD has every right as a membership organization to require dues, I think we can all agree that the voice of the person unable to pay them should not thereby be silenced when it comes to the creation of a park. The very person

continued on next page

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Friends of North Beach

continued from previous page

who thinks dues might be a hardship because of the costs of raising kids might be the person most committed to a park.

A second observation, based on a more recent public event: Not long ago I lost my Internet access by trying to do something fancy with the memory of my Apple G-4. I spent over two weeks signing up for and using the computers at North Beach Library (a great service!) — my first experience with the local branch in years.

I relied on kids there to explain how things worked—they are experts—and who were these kids? About 90 percent Asian American. Yet when the San Francisco Library held a forum for the neighborhood on refurbishing the branch only four of the 56 people attending were Asian American.

Is there a way this problem can be overcome? It is our hope at Friends of North Beach that as an issue-oriented advocacy group we can successfully solicit input from disenfranchised neighbors by lowering the barriers, opening more doors, literally making it as easy as possible to join the discussion.

Based on the people who signed our petition in favor of creating a park on the Triangle, we believe that THD and non-THD members want open space, that all good citizens recognize that parks must be paid for, that native and non-native English speakers alike value kids above condos.

And we believe that in one of the richest cities in one of the richest countries in the world, hand-wringing “cannot”s are embarrassing.

“Friends of North Beach” intends to confidently do whatever it takes to make our neighborhood beautiful again.

Marc Bruno is vice president of THD and a founder of Friends of North Beach.





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Facelift in the Works for Broadway Mural

By Marsha Garland

What do Ulysses S. Grant, Christopher Columbus and Herb Caen have in common? All were painted onto the sides of North Beach buildings by San Francisco muralist Bill Weber.

Weber has painted a number of murals in the neighborhood over his long career, including the Grant & Green Bar's \$50 bill featuring Ulysses S. Grant. He also painted the Columbus mural on the side of the Columbus Cafe. And 20 years ago, he painted a tribute to North Beach at the corner of Broadway and Columbus. That work was commissioned by Giovanni Toracca. A sprawling, two-sided, three-story mural, it depicts the history of Chinatown and North Beach, featuring icons like Emperor Norton, jazz musicians, Italian fishermen, the Imperial Dragon and Herb Caen.

Today, a number of neighborhood organizations and businesses have embarked upon a res-

toration project for this great piece of public art. The North Beach Chamber of Commerce initiated the restoration project after being approached by the artist just over a year ago. In addition to soliciting donations from the community, we are also applying for grant money.

Weber would like to restore the mural in four stages. He wants to start on the quarter where the political figures and piano player are. Weber has been ill of late and would like to get this mural repainted quickly in case of a relapse, so there is a sense of urgency to the project.

About \$18,000 of the needed \$73,000 has been raised. Donations have come in amounts as small as \$5 and as big as \$5,000. The Stinking Rose has donated \$2,000, the Broadway clubs have donated \$1,000, and Precious Cheese, the title sponsor of the North Beach Festival has contributed \$10,000. \$500 each from North Beach

Neighbors and Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Our plan for raising the rest of the money is to put advertising banners on the scaffolding, keep soliciting donations, and keep pursuing grants.

If you'd like to help out, please make your donation to the North Beach Neighbors' Mural Trust Account, P.O. Box 330115, San Francisco 94133.

Marsha Garland is executive director of the North Beach Chamber of Commerce.



Bill Weber's three story ode to North Beach needs some restoration work.

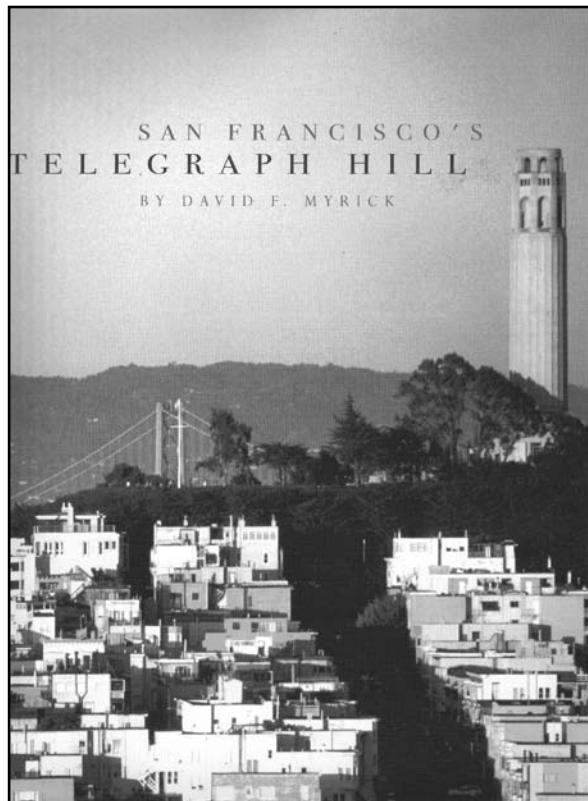
PHOTO BY BOB McMILLAN

Order your copy of San Francisco's Telegraph Hill

As almost everyone who has lived on Telegraph Hill for long knows, *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* by David Myrick is a collector's item. The out-of-print first edition of this book, lovingly detailing the colorful history of the Hill, sells for \$200 these days.

Last year, David agreed to make revisions to the original, and THD agreed to sponsor the second edition of the Myrick book. The new volume includes 32 new pages and 50 more photographs.

To order your book, please fill out the order form below.



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EDITOR'S DESK *continued from p. 5*

but I believe that people in North Beach set the gold standard when it comes to taking stewardship of our public spaces and creating a rich community life. It's why I love living here, and why I find it so hard to believe that there is any serious community opposition to the idea of adding a little more green space to our neighborhood.

I thought I might have run into someone who opposed the triangle park idea the other day in Washington Square. There was a man there handing out flyers calling the new park proposal a "sweetheart deal." I asked him for his thoughts on 701 Lombard, but he referred me instead to his supervisor. Apparently he'd just been hired to

Holiday Gift Ideas

By Tom Noyes

How about giving a gift of a THD membership to a neighbor or friend for the holidays this year?

Last year, I was happy to arrange a gift membership, sending the membership package to the giver, who gave it as a present for the holiday. I carefully kept notice of this from being sent until after Dec. 25, and I'd be happy to do the same or help with another membership gift idea for you.

Perhaps you'd prefer to give your friend the membership early so they can attend the holiday party with you in early December, as a member. Either way, just e-mail me at tom@noyesfamily.com or call at 981-8520 to make arrangements.

Another perfect holiday gift is a copy of David Myrick's *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill*. Order forms are included in the *Semaphore* and also on the website at www.thd.org. You can also just write THD with a check for \$41.48 per copy and include contact and delivery information.

hand out the flyers.

So much for grass-roots opposition.

The only sweetheart deal here seems to be an attempt to thwart the longstanding interests of our community and build a multimillion dollar condominium project in front of the Joe DiMaggio playground.

At least the condo's developers got one thing right. They knew the one place where their hired pamphleteers would be able to reach the broadest cross-section of our community: In a public park.



Money from the sale of this book benefits THD, so you're helping the neighborhood as well as giving a wonderful book.

**ZAP Graffiti and
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Call City Hotline
28-CLEAN**
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THD Welcomes New Members May 2003 to July 2003

Alice Belfor & James Atwood, Kirk Bell, Ryan Chamberlain, Heather Fong, Janis Mitchell & John Gordon, John Henry, Michele Liapes, Tiny Maes, Caroline Eggli & Jordan Shlain, Hillary Connors & Reuben Steiger, and Mary Sullivan.

Tony Long welcomes Carolyn Blair to THD at the August New Members' party.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified rates are \$20 for 4 lines, \$30 for 5-7 lines. Please call 788-8667 to place an ad. Next deadline is January 1.

INVISIBLE ROOMMATE seeks room to rent part-time in the neighborhood. I'm a 48-year-old female professional living in San Luis Obispo, but working in San Francisco three days a week (T-Th). Looking for a roommate situation — preferably with someone in my own age group. I'm out often in the evenings and gone all day so you will hardly ever see me. Neat, non-drinker, non-smoker. Email me at jghosin@ureach.com.

For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

PHONE

EMAIL:

CHECK ENCLOSED FOR 1-YEAR MEMBERSHIP

Individual \$25 _____ Household \$40 _____ Senior (age 65 and over) \$15 _____



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the perfect place on Telegraph Hill.
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THD CALENDAR

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS
P.O. Box 330159
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133

2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties, November 8, December 13, January 10. Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774.

OCTOBER

11th—THD Movie night in Washington Square

DECEMBER

7th—THD annual Christmas dinner

NOVEMBER

10th—General Membership Dinner

Dates and locations subject to change.

Schedules of Committee Meetings

PLANNING & ZONING: First Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070.

For more information, log on to <http://www.thd.org>

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