

The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Russian Hill Upholstery & Decor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

At the Warfield: Underworld, 4/21. Hippie Sabotage, 4/22. Goose, 4/27 - 28. Caroline Polachek, 5/1 -2. Ella Mai, 5/10. P-Lo, 5/13. Placebo, 5/14.

At the Asian Art Museum - Color Trip: *Yoshida Hodaka's Modern Prints*, through 5/1. *Beyond Bollywood: 2000 Years of Dance and Art*, through 7/10.

Cheese Boat is a new Georgian restaurant on Grant Avenue in North Beach. Not U.S. Georgia, the one in Eastern Europe.

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Back around 1995, the Herald's own Ace Backwords put out a CD with his music as well as music performed by other Berkeley street people. It was titled "Will Make Noise for Food."

The launch party for it was at a fairly famous bar/live music venue in Berkeley. I remember the walls of the place were adorned with signs from demonstrations from years earlier that proclaimed things like "U.S. Out of Central America." The bar's owner was a prominent activist.

Not long after that evening, Ace told me that the owner of the bar had died. It turns out he threw someone out who was harassing other customers there. The guy who got thrown out was an illegal alien from Mexico, who came back when the place closed, and shot the owner, who eventually died. They murderer fled south of the border and was never caught.

I was thinking of that recently while walking around Oakland's Temescal neighborhood. Many businesses had signs in their windows warning customers to leave their car doors unlocked so thieves wouldn't smash in their car windows. They were next to the "Black Lives Matter" signs businesses had so their store windows wouldn't get smashed in. Uh, I mean to show their support for BLM.

It wasn't far from here where, recently, the owner of a bakery who was also a prominent activist was killed. Her bakery had been broken into and vandalized numerous times before, but each time she announced that those responsible shouldn't be punished. She apparently changed her mind when she resisted her purse getting snatched. The thieves pulled her fifty feet by their getaway car before she hit her head and was eventually declared brain dead. Her friends and family have announced that if the police make arrests the criminals shouldn't be punished -- that "traditional prosecution" be avoided in favor of "restorative justice."



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Oakland is the birthplace of the Black Panthers. In 1974 the white bookkeeper for them noticed they were cooking the books and headed for tax problems. Shortly after she threatened to go public with it, she was tortured, raped, and murdered.

So there's a meditation on an East Bay "woke" triumvirate. I wonder if in their last moments, these social justice warriors thought they were being hit by friendly fire.###



David Bowie and Ryuichi Sakamoto on the set of the 1983 film *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence*. Good movie about British P.O.W.s in Japan during World War II., with an even better score. Sakamoto had his acting debut in this and he wrote the film's music. He got his start in *Yellow Magic Orchestra*. Sakamoto died on March 28th at age 71.

Herald Archives: Early 2000s

The Bell Curve

By Lee Vilensky

Driving a cab used to be easy money. People would ask me, "How do you like driving a cab?" to which I'd invariably answer, "Beats working."

But 9/11 and the tech industry collapse have made it a struggle, or as one driver likes to put it, "tough bucks". S.F. may have been one of the hardest hit cities by recent events, and cabbies are feeling it to the tune of a 40% wage decrease. I used to be able to swing a dead cat anywhere downtown and hit several tourists, but the tourists are gone, and the

Humane Society has filed charges against me for swinging around dead cats. The salad days are over, and we're stuck with a bowl full of tepid, curdled dressing.

In light of current economic woes, it seems odd to me that large corporations are building, or have just completed construction, of several upscale hotels in downtown San Francisco. The brand spanking new Omni at California and Montgomery, the Courtyard monoliths reminding us of the economic boom of the '90's, and the myopic nature of several CEO's in the new millennium. They forgot about the "bell curve". All things in nature, science, mathematics, love, lust, baseball, and most importantly, the economy, are subject to the predictable laws of the "bell curve". I learned this in 10th grade and immediately formulated the following axiom: "When things are going well, something will come along to fuck it up."

After 15 years of driving a cab, I'm making relatively less money than ever. It seems like I'm playing tag with empty cabs, chasing them around the city. I've been forced to rely on instinct (luck), and 15 years of finely honed cabbie technique (cheating) to make money. Little tricks like "back loading", "front loading", "double loading", stealing radio orders from other companies, "stretching", "picking off the tops" (at SFO), have become de rigueur. These used to be things I'd do on an off night when no one was looking. Now I just do it like a man picking food out of the garbage. Pride dissipated through fear and hunger. Well, I'm not hungry yet, but I do have a fear of the prospect of hunger.

The other night I was headed to Pier 39. At Mason and Francisco I espied a woman standing in the doorway of the San Remo Hotel, with luggage, waiting for something. I slowed down and looked at her. She looked at me. I put on my flashers and beeped my horn. She was pensive, unsure of herself, and not sure if I was the cab called for her.

My gaze was impatient, confident, commanding, sure of myself, and quite sure that I was not the cab, or cab company, called for her. (Being right is the same thing as being absolutely sure that you are wrong. Ask any politician.) I willed her ass into my lair of public service transport. You can do that with people. Stare them down until they get in your cab. Quite often they have no intention of taking a cab, but I can't be bothered with minutiae in these times of economic woe. I loaded her luggage into the trunk and we headed for SFO. In my rear view mirror I saw a Yellow Cab screech around the corner, the speed of his approach a sure indicator that he sensed the pilferage. Might as well shake an apple tree in the winter, Yellow Man.

"Is this a Yellow Cab?"

"Yes, yellow and green."

End of conversation. I dropped her at US Air, and an elderly couple walked out of the terminal, towards my cab. They were carrying a large plastic garbage can, and wanted a ride downtown. In 15 years of driving a cab, I have never picked up, or dropped off, anyone at the airport, whose sole piece of luggage was a large, plastic garbage can. I didn't ask. Time was of the essence, because picking up passengers on top, at "Departures", is strictly illegal. It's illegal because 200 cabs are lined up downstairs, at "Arrivals", for this very purpose. They've paid \$3.25 for the privilege of sucking fumes for at least an hour, before lining up outside the "Arrivals" terminal and getting a fare. I looked around for a cop, then loaded their garbage into the trunk and split, fucking 200 fellow drivers downstairs. Kind of a reverse gang bang.

The ride was uneventful and the conversation was short, and to the point.

"Is that a Samsonite or an American Tourister?"

"Rubbermaid, the only way to travel."

"Or do dishes."

"Right."

I dropped them off in the Mission, then headed north on South Van Ness, towards downtown. At 16th and South, I picked up a large black man dressed like a Russian peasant woman. He was headed to a bar on Turk Street called Aunt Charlie's. We had a brief conversation:

"How's your night been, cabbie?"

"Interesting. Just dropped off two people from the airport, whose only luggage was a plastic garbage can."

"Well, it takes all kinds to make a world."

"Yeah, and it's a great, big world."###

Herald Archives: 1999 or 2000. I forget.

Toon Talk By Howard Hallis

"Conspiracy Theories and Velvet"

Almost everybody has a friend of theirs who's into weird conspiracies, UFOs, Bigfoot, and unexplained phenomena. I have a few buddies who are up on this stuff, and one of them let me in on a few tidbits I feel I should share with you. Whether or not they are true remains to be seen, but if I disappear next week and this turns out to be the last Toon Talk you ever see, it will probably be more than a coincidence.

Here is the latest buzz from the classified files of the paranoids:

1. VECTOR ZERO - A theoretical (?) electromagnetic point that creates a 4-dimensional gravitational charge that not only enables one to harness anti-gravity, but possible time-travel and teleportation as well. Vector Zero, from what I could understand, is the state achieved when protons and neutrons are constantly changing back and forth, one becoming the other. In doing so, they become nucleons. This somehow fluxates particles from electrical to gravitational magnetism, enabling super-fast travel if only one can regulate the changes in the correct manner. According to "inside sources", the government has been testing electro-gravitational vehicles for some time now. Perhaps these are UFOs... Or perhaps the person who thought this up smoked a lot of weed and watched too many episodes of "The X Files". You decide.

2. TESLA DEATH RAY AND FORCE FIELD - Perhaps you've heard of Nikolai Tesla's Death Ray, but did you know The Russkies actually built a giant one in the early '70s? Not only that, but the thing could be used as an electromagnetic force field as well, stopping any bombs from reaching the lower atmosphere. This one might actually have some basis of fact to it, believe it or not. For more info, check out <http://www.cseti.org/bearden/part1/teslaweap ons.htm>

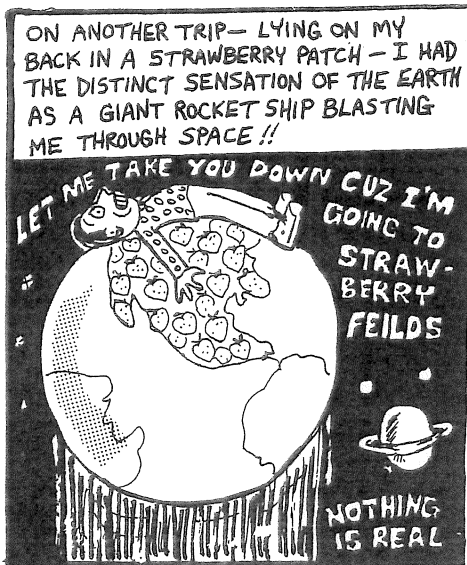
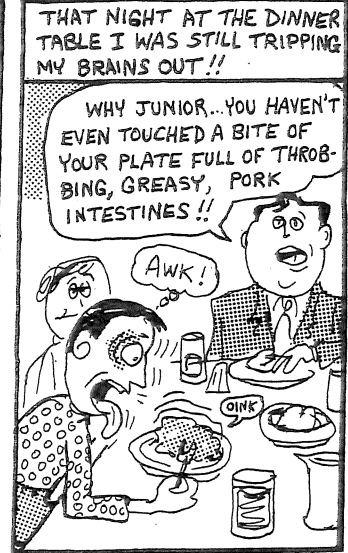
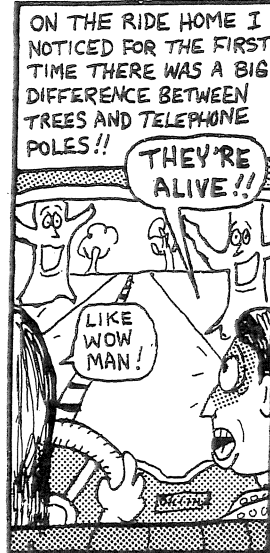
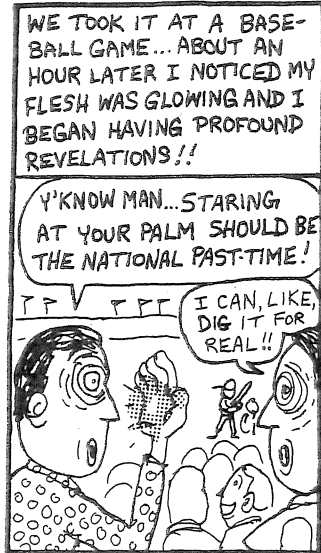
3. THE TAOS HUM - A low-pitched sound heard around the world (especially in the US and UK) that is usually only heard in quiet environments that sounds like a distant diesel engine. This sound is undetectable by recording devices of any kind and its source remains a mystery. One possible explanation: If it sounds like distant diesel engines, that's probably exactly what it is. The whole thing reminds me of tweakers who say: "Listen! Shhhh!! Quiet! Do you hear THAT?!? That noise! That really low sound... What the hell is that? Do you hear it too? DO YOU?!?! ..." Idiots.

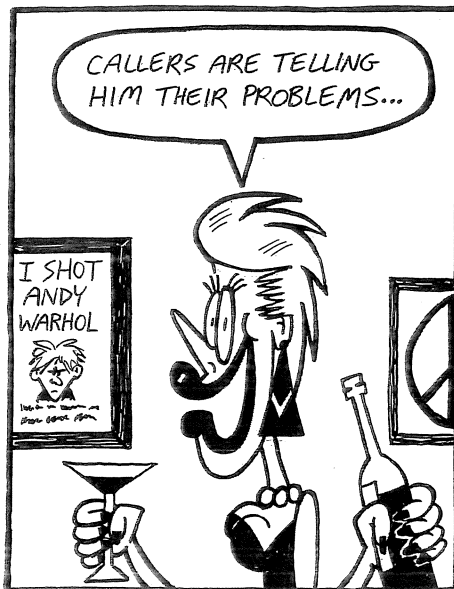
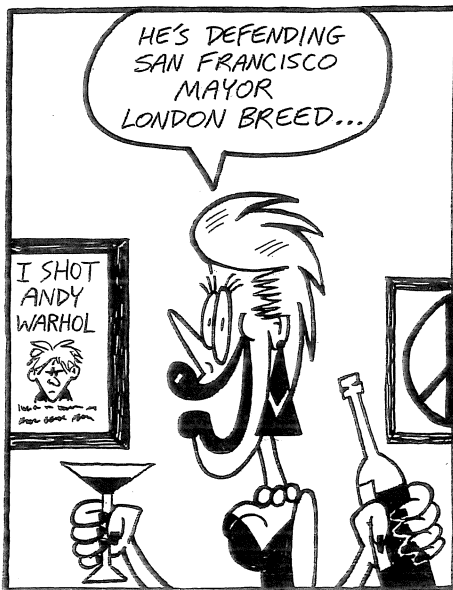
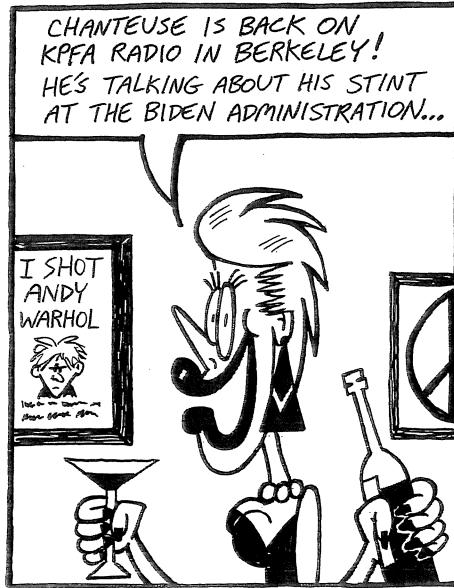
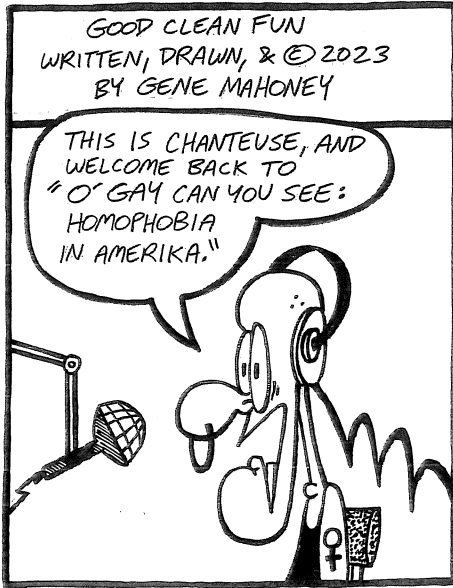
4. THE MATRIX IS REAL - Many people really think life is really a computer simulated 3D virtual environment. I can believe that to a point, as it would explain the success of the Olsen Twins, but does that mean Keanu Reeves REALLY is the chosen one? Well, he did play the Buddha (in "Little Buddha"), and Bill and Ted were worshipped by the people of the future (in "Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey")... He was even the son of Satan ("Devil's Advocate")! Perhaps Keanu's movies are trying to tell us something... That he IS a being of great power and either the savior or the antichrist in the guise of a bad actor. So, in closing: Watch out for fanatical followers of Keanuism with their anti-gravity space craft and death rays emitting those low frequency diesel engine hums... They may be out to get you!

A friend of mine found the greatest velvet painting ever done when he went to Tijuana. It was a monster truck driving down the highway with Elvis and Jesus shaking hands in the clouds above it. This is symbolic on so many levels... Jesus taking the place of Nixon in the classic pose, the juxtaposition of the big rig on the endless road... Brilliant. Beautiful. True artistic genius. You can see it in your mind, can't you?

There's something about the rich texture of airbrush on velvet that brings to mind a nostalgia for Mexican restaurants, hotel lobbies from the 1970's, Tiki bars, naked women, big-eyed Keene children, American pop culture and clowns. You can't forget the clowns. Some people have particular velvet obsessions. There's this one collector who only collects velvet Lionel Richies and has over 2 dozen different paintings. They range in portraits to full-body renderings. The guy goes to Mexico so regularly that he is now able to tell the difference between particular artists, noting that some of his "Lionels" were obviously done by the same person. I'm not making this up. I know you probably think that after my cartoon idea a few weeks ago about "Lionel Richie's Mustache" that I'd make any excuse to mention the singer as often as I can... Well, that may be true, but... this isn't B.S. There REALLY is someone out there with a collection of velvet Lionels. I'll let you know if and when he puts them on display.

Probably the funniest velvet painting story I ever heard was told to me by Paul K., an art professor and a former member of the Los Angeles band The Imperial Butt Wizards. I noticed a giant velvet lobster painting he had up in his home and asked him where he got it. He told me: "The band was eating at this seafood place in Hollywood that had the painting prominently displayed over one of the tables. It was beautiful and we knew we had to have it, so we decided to steal the thing. They had it screwed into the wall, probably because of earlier attempts to heist the thing, so some planning had to be involved. Our drummer and guitar player got ahold of some military outfits from World War II and decided to distract the maître d' while I secretly unscrewed the frame. My friends were making quite a scene, bothering customers with salutes and marching songs, and the staff was having a hard time trying to throw them out. Finally, I got the picture off the wall and we all bolted down the street with our prized velvet crustacean. The owner of the restaurant chased after us, screaming bloody murder. We all jumped in a van and drove away. We covered the van's license plate with a cardboard sign that simply said: 'LOBSTER.'" This story might sound hard to believe, but I think it's true. Paul has one of the world's largest private taxidermy collections and used to blow up giant stuffed animals during his band's performances. Stealing lobster paintings would not seem out of character for him at all.###





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Emperor Norton's BoozeLand, 510 Larkin at Turk, (415) 926-8118. Great local bar; large back patio, billiards, shuffleboard, Pliny on draft. Open every day at 1pm. Happy Hour Monday - Friday 1PM - 7PM.

Happy Hour Special, 3PM - 6PM: Tecate \$3, Corona \$4, Modelo \$5, Bare Bottle \$6, Sangria \$8. **Chisme Cantina**, 882 Sutter. (415) 370-7070. Catering available.

Good Old Fashioned Values. Wide selection of beer and wine. Groceries and general merchandise. **Discount Grocers**, 1203 Polk (at Sutter). (415) 929-7385.

Gastroboteats, 1096 Union (at Leavenworth), www.gastroboteats.com, (415) 307-6141. Modern street food, new-style green salads, soups and stews. Delivery or take-out.

Pat's Café, 2330 Taylor (off Columbus). (415) 776-8735. Breakfast, lunch, & weekend brunch. Indoor & outdoor dining. 7:30 AM – 2 PM daily. Takeout, call directly or order online. PatsCafeSF.com.

Kennedy's Irish Pub & India Curry House, 1040 Columbus, (415) 441-8855. World class beer selection and Indian cuisine. Delivery available via GrubHub and Uber Eats.

Cozy café/laundromat combo. Artisan eats & espresso at integrated **Hideaway Café**, 850 Jones (at Bush). (925) 724-4464.