

The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Russian Hill Upholstery and Décor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

If you read it in the Herald, you probably know it already: Rosamunde Sausage in the Lower Haight may be gone, but its spirit lives on with Berliner Berliner, run by Christine Blunck, a former employee of Rosamunde. If you want German meats, this is the place. There's more German meat here than in Hamburg's Reeperbahn.

New taqueria opening soon (maybe it already has) next to The Saloon in North Beach. It's another El Farolito location.

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February is Black History Month. And who better to write about it, than a white guy from the suburbs?

When you think of black poets, Maya Angelou comes to mind. You've probably never heard of Phillis Wheatley.

Phillis Wheatley was born in West Africa in 1753, sold into slavery at age 7 or 8, and shipped to North America, where she was purchased by the Wheatley family of Boston. John and Susanna Wheatley named her Phillis, after the ship that took her to America, and bequeathed her the family's last name.

John Wheatley had his son and daughter tutor Phillis, and by age 12 she was reading Greek, Latin, and difficult passages from the Bible. Her education was extremely unusual for a slave and even for a woman of any race. At age 14 she wrote her first poem, and the Wheatleys assigned her household labor to their other slaves.

In 1773, at age 20, Phillis traveled to London and met with the Lord Mayor and other members of English high society. King George III had agreed to meet her but she returned to Boston before it could take place. The Countess of Huntingdon paid for the publication of Phillis's book of poems, whereupon the Wheatleys emancipated Phillis.

In 1775, the year the American Revolution started, she sent a poem she wrote to George Washington which was about him, and he invited her to visit him. Thomas Paine, author of the pamphlet *Common Sense* which convinced many colonists to break away from England, republished the poem in the Pennsylvania Gazette, though Thomas Jefferson wasn't impressed with her aesthetic abilities.

Many black academics since the 1960s have dismissed Phillis's writings as "Uncle



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Tom Syndrome," though she did write a letter to the Reverend Samson Occom praising him for his support of enslaved people being given their natural born rights in America.

Susana Wheatley died in 1774, and John died in 1778. Not long afterwards Phillis married John Peters, a free black grocer. They lived in poverty, two of their three babies died, and John was imprisoned for debt in 1784.

Left with an infant son in poor health, Phillis became a maid at a boarding house. She died in 1784 at age 31, a pioneer in the field of forgotten, destitute, former celebrities. Her infant son died shortly afterwards.



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No doubt you're familiar with black civil rights leaders like Jesse Jackson and black revolutionaries like Huey Newton and Angela Davis. You've probably never heard of Samuel B. Fuller, who had a much different philosophy than them.

Fuller was born into poverty in 1905. His Louisiana sharecropper family was so poor he had to drop out of school in sixth grade. At age 9 he began selling products door to door. At age 17 his mother died, leaving her 7 children on their own. Fuller recounted years later that they were offered Relief (what Welfare was called back then) but they turned it down because in those days it was shameful to accept it.

At age 23 he moved to Chicago and worked menial jobs, eventually becoming manager of a coal yard, then an insurance representative for a black firm. He borrowed \$25 using his car as collateral and founded his own company, Fuller Products, at the dawn of the Great Depression in 1929. (He said he preferred freedom to security.) The company sold deodorant, hair care items, hosiery, and men's suits. He went on to purchase some newspapers, a department store, and a theater.

Fuller was a black Republican who promoted civil rights and briefly ran the Chicago NAACP. When Martin Luther King Jr. organized a boycott of the Montgomery Bus Line, Fuller tried to get black investors to purchase it instead, to no avail.

In the 1950s Fuller was probably the wealthiest black man in the U.S., and one third of his 5,000 member work force was white.

Then the White Citizens Councils organized a boycott of his products when they learned an African-American owned the company.

After that, he gave a speech where he stated that "a lack of understanding of the capitalist system and not racial barriers was keeping blacks from making progress." Later in a magazine interview he said, "Negroes are not discriminated against because of the color of their skin. They are discriminated against because they have not anything to offer that people want to buy." Many black leaders were outraged and called for a boycott of his products.

Then, strike 3. Fuller was charged with selling unregistered promissory notes in interstate commerce. He pleaded guilty, was placed on 5 years' probation, and ordered to repay creditors \$1.6 million, causing Fuller Products to file bankruptcy in 1971. The company reorganized and reported profits in 1972, though a fraction of what they were.

Samuel B. Fuller died of kidney failure in 1988.

In 1986 I cut classes for a week at the College of San Mateo ("high school with ashtrays") to attend protests at UC Berkeley.

I did it to feel important, to meet chicks, and for some other reason. Oh yeah, to protest apartheid in South Africa. As you may remember, the South African system of apartheid was a separation of the races run by a white ruling class.

You must remember Nelson Mandela, the black anti-apartheid revolutionary there who went on to become president of the country once apartheid ended and he was freed from prison.

You probably haven't heard of Eusebio Penalver, a black political prisoner who spent 28 years in Cuba's dungeons, a year longer than Mandela was imprisoned in South Africa.

Mandela's confinement had him live in a cottage with a garden, swimming pool, television, radio, and any visitor he wanted. Penalver lived under different conditions for opposing the Castro regime.

"For months I was naked in a 6x4 foot cell," he told author Humberto Fontova. "That's 4 feet high, so you couldn't stand. But I felt a great freedom inside myself. I refused to commit spiritual suicide."

Eusebio Penalver spent several months in a "punishment cell" naked, in complete darkness. His jailers would routinely taunt him with racial slurs.

The prison population of Cuba is 90% black while only 9% of the ruling communist government is black.

By the way --- Maya Angelou, Jesse Jackson, Huey Newton, Angela Davis, and Nelson Mandela all publicly and enthusiastically supported Cuba's Castro regime. So have Black Lives Matter, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright (spiritual advisor to Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey), as well as former NFL quarterback/professional victim Colin Kaepernick.

Eusebio Penalver eventually became a U.S. citizen and lived in Miami for 20 years.

He died in 2006.

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Imagine Picasso: The Immersive Exhibition, Skylight at the Armory, 2/9-3/27. **At the Warfield:** Oliver Tree Presents Cowboy Tears, 2/22. Killswitch Engage, 2/23. Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit with Shawn Colvin, 2/24-25. Underoath, 2/26. **At the Regency Ballroom:** Turnstile, 2/22-23. Current Joys with Dark Tea, 2/24. Droeloe, 2/25. New barber shop sharing space at Frank's Shoe Repair, 1619 Polk. Quetzal Café on Polk is closed for a bit.

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Whoever is spray painting all that graffiti around Polk Street, do us all a favor. Leave the city. Actually, leave the state.

Actually, leave the country. Make that the planet.

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As I write this it's February 4th, a few days after an economist at Johns Hopkins, one of the most respected medical institutions in the country (actually, the world) issued a report concluding that the Covid lockdowns did little to nothing in preventing Covid deaths. According to the report the lockdown only reduced the death rate by 0.2%. Furthermore it urged that "lockdowns should be rejected out of hand." They cause more harm than good.

CNN, MSNBC, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Associated Press, Reuters, USA Today, Axios, Politico and most other media outlets still haven't reported the findings. Haven't seen them in the Chronicle either.

The lockdowns caused a massive increase in drug overdose deaths, domestic violence incidents, student learning loss, and unemployment, to name just a few.

Also, the report claimed that the lockdowns limited peoples' access to safe outdoor places like beaches and parks and had them stay at less safe indoor places.

I don't know if the report mentioned those people who drive alone with the car windows rolled up and still wear masks, to lessen the risk of infecting themselves. Or the politicians who require us to wear masks while they don't, yet claim they do, despite photographic evidence to the contrary. (Maybe they "identify" with wearing masks.)

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The Thin White Duke Remembered

By Ace Backwards

I first saw David Bowie in the summer of 1974 at Madison Square Garden. New York City, baby. The "Diamond Dogs" tour. . . I don't think I had actually heard any of David Bowie's music at the time. Aside from maybe "All the Young Dudes" by Mott the Hoople (which Bowie wrote).

My older sister's boyfriend was a huge David Bowie fan. Which was weird. Because he was mostly a Grateful Dead Deadhead. And you wouldn't think that somebody like that would be a David Bowie fan, too. But there you go. Anyways, he had an extra ticket for the Madison Square Garden show. So I tagged along. I knew that Bowie was a big sensation in England at the time. The leading light of the "Glitter Rock" movement. The Next Big Thing according to the media. But he hadn't quite caught on in America yet. Though the media hype machine was pushing hard.



Bowie — who was always one step ahead of the game — captured his own phenomenon perfectly with his *Diamond Dogs* album cover. Presenting himself as a Barnum and Bailey freak show. Myself? I was a 17-year-old high school jock at the time who was just beginning to dabble with LSD. So the whole David Bowie thing seemed a little too gay and campy for my tastes. But what the hell. I couldn't turn down a free ticket. I still vividly remember that *Diamond Dogs* show all these years later. Big dramatic entrance. Bowie reciting his "rats as big as cats" soliloquy. This apocalyptic rant. Ending with him shouting: "THIS ISN'T ROCK'N'ROLL, THIS IS GENOCIDE!!" And then bursting into the music. And he's got these two half dog/ half-human creatures that he's holding on long leashes. And they're scampering across the stage like barely controlled wild animals while Bowie is singing. A helluva' entrance.

And, unlike so many other concerts, Bowie held your attention for the entire rest of the show. There was something captivating and magnetic about Bowie. You couldn't take your eyes off of him. But it wasn't just Show Biz shtick. Even at age 17 I could tell there was a high intelligence behind the sensation. Something conceptual. The allusions to Orwell's *1984* and all the rest of it. For once there was some real substance behind the Next Big Thing hype.

There was also this zany humor along with the outrageousness. And people forget: This was the era of "jam rock" where rock stars took the stage wearing blue jeans and work shirts and turned their backs to the audience and did 20 minute guitar solos. It was very innovative for the times, the way Bowie put together this show that was choreographed almost like a Broadway theater production, but without losing the spontaneity and rawness that made rock music so great in the first place.

But the bottom line (which sometimes got lost in the mix because of all of Bowie's other talents) was that Bowie was an extremely tuneful songwriter, belting out one great song after another. What can I say. I became a lifelong David Bowie fan after that *Diamond Dogs* show in 1974. And I've enjoyed just about everything David Bowie has done since then.###

Cab Driving Axiom No. 1A

By Lee Vilensky

Cab driving Axiom #1A: "Driving a cab is fun, until someone actually gets in your cab."

Yes indeed, that's when it becomes work, and not the driving part, but the socializing. Forget that 51% of the populous is rude, incomprehensibly boorish, malodorous, oblivious, unfashionable, Republican, homophobic, jingoistic. Forget all that. It's the stupidity, the bold faced ignorance, of the person sitting right behind me, or next to me, if their thick-skulled, heavy-eye lidded family is crowded into the backseat.

I realize one can't choose their parents, and a small brain doesn't mean a small heart, but damn, anyone can access knowledge, then masquerade it as at least a modicum of intelligence, with maybe even some common sense thrown in for effect.

Why if J. Eddy Hoover were still alive, we'd have files on people who buy "Die Hard 3" on DVD. I for one, want to know where these people are, and what they're doing, at all times. Maybe the Feds could put something in their water that would make them sterile, or sleepy, or desirous of Fellini movies. I don't know. Just keep the sumbitches out of my cab. They don't tip so good either, I don't mind telling you, these people too lazy to think, or read a travel guide. Here's an example of the type of person cab drivers have to deal with 51% of the time:

I'm in the cab line at Pier 39, so I'm already in the "Idiot Zone", when a tubby family of five gets in my cab. "Oh my, it was so warm this afternoon, when we decided to don our balloon shorts and 'Hard Rock Cafe - Moline, Ill.' T-shirts, and didn't think to bring a jacket.", I can see them silently complaining to me with their doughy slits for eyes, as if it's my fault that the temperature dropped, and they're a little chilly. Every single publication concerning San Francisco ever printed, anywhere in the world, makes constant mention of a 'cooling trend' towards evening, but they were too busy looking for Planet Hollywood 2 for 1 coupons to notice this information. Three kids and mom in the back, dad up front with me; my new friend.

Dad: We need to get to the Super 8 Motel on Lombard Street. Do you think you can get us there?

Me: I'm confident that I can.

Dad: What are you listening to?

Me: The Giants game.

Dad: Baseball?

Me: You got it.

Dad: What's the score?

Me: I don't know. I'm trying to find out.

Dad: Are they playing here?

Me: Chicago.

Dad: Are you a Giants fan?

Me: Yes. Are you?

Dad: Oh no. I don't even like baseball.

Me: Why would you ask me 5 questions about baseball if you're not interested?

Dad: Just making small talk. Where you from?

Me: You don't want me to listen to the game, is that it?

At that point I realize I'm getting surly, but can't help myself. I also know that in a random survey of Americans, I'd be the freak, and the "Pudge Family" would land exactly in the middle of normal. Five on the scale of ten. I know this.

Dad: Of course you can listen to the game, why are you asking me?

Me: Because it's pretty damn hard to listen with you asking me non-stop questions. I'm going to start charging you fifty cents a question.

I say this with something resembling a smile, and dad laughs. I dodge a bullet there.

Mom: Do most of these buildings have basements?

Me: The last basement census I took was 5 years ago, and I believe the percentage of buildings was somewhere around..... how in the world would I know? What kind of question is that? Don't you want to ask me about museums, or restaurants, or Golden Gate Park, or something useful to you on your visit here? I have to listen to the game now. Please excuse me.

At this point mom asks dad to roll up his window (I think she's mad at me, or she might be thinking of fresh mangoes, I guess it would be impossible to say.) Now here comes the challenge. Dad looks down

at the armrest, and identifies 2 buttons. And I have to give him credit for that, as certain tourists are helpless without a manual window crank and too intimidated to push any buttons, or ask for my help. And no help is exactly what they get. If they don't have the balls to push a button, or ask me to raise the window, then fuck 'em, they can freeze. I'll wait 'em out, even if we get on the freeway, and I'M cold, I'm not raising the damn window for them. This job will make an honest, decent, good-hearted person into a sadist.

He's got a 50% chance of raising the window, and of course he picks wrong and locks the doors. Not a big deal at this point of the contest. Dad takes his hand away from the armrest and ponders the dilemma he's gotten himself, and his family, into. He now has, according to odds makers in Vegas and Reno, 1/1 odds, or a 100% chance of choosing the correct button to raise the window, and keep his lovely cottage cheese ass bride from catching a chill. Dad looks straight ahead, takes a deep breath, and quickly unlocks the doors. Tried to sneak up on the button and fooled it into raising the window.

Me: I think you should try the other button.

I pull into the Super 8 and they all get out of the cab. Dad tips me nicely despite the hushed conference with his wife, and I feel bad about my rude behavior. He's a better man than I, able to put aside petty differences for the common good of mankind. I make yet another mental note to start being more patient with goofy assholes. The Giants beat the Cubs 8 to 7 on a 9th inning Bonds homer, plus a Rob Nen save, and the night takes an imperceptible (to the untrained eye) swing upward.###

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BY GENE MAHONEY

"FROM
YALE
TO
STALE"
OR
"WHAT A
LONG,
STRANGE
STRIP IT'S BEEN...
AND BEEN...
AND BEEN...
AND BEEN..."



HEY, MIKE!
LONG TIME NO SEE!
HOW'S IT GOING OVER
AT "DOONESBURY"?



I KNOW THE DOONESBURY STRIPS
ON WEEKDAYS ARE OLD REPRINTS,
BUT DID GARRY TRUDEAU STOP
DRAWING NEW ONES ON SUNDAYS, TOO?
THEY'RE ALL ABOUT TRUMP.



NO, THEY'RE NEW ONES.
JOE BIDEN HASN'T DONE
ANYTHING WORTHY OF SATIRE.



IT'S AMAZING HOW THINGS CHANGE.
WHEN DOONESBURY STARTED IN
YALE'S NEWSPAPER ITS VIBE WAS VERY
1960S FREE SPEECH LIBERALISM.

NOW ITS VIBE IS THE CURRENT
"WOKE" AUTHORITARIAN LIBERALISM.



AND IT NEVER DEVIATES FROM IT.

AND DOONESBURY HAS BEEN SO
IN FAVOR OF THESE STRICT
COVID LOCKDOWNS.



YES.
WHY,
THANK
YOU.

I FEEL THE MOST SORRY FOR THE
LITTLE KIDS WHO HAD TO ENDURE
THE SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND MASKS.
THEY'RE GOING TO BE MESSED UP
PSYCHOLOGICALLY FOR LIFE.



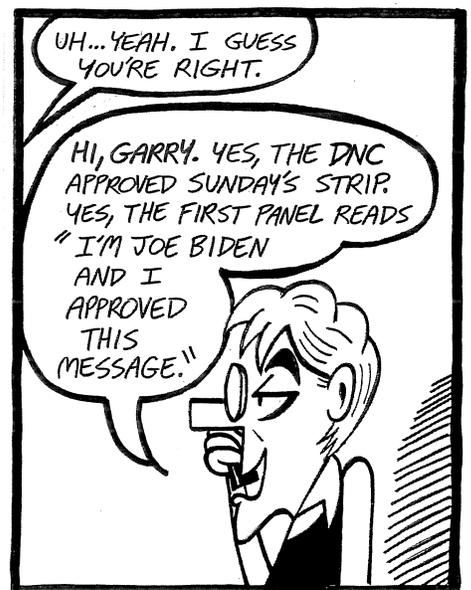
WELL, THE SCHOOL CLOSINGS NEVER
WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF TRUMP
HADN'T BEEN IN FAVOR OF
OPENING THE SCHOOLS!
IF HE WANTED THEM CLOSED
WE WOULD
HAVE WANTED
THEM
OPEN!

WHAT'S MORE
IMPORTANT...
KIDS OR
RESISTING
TRUMP?

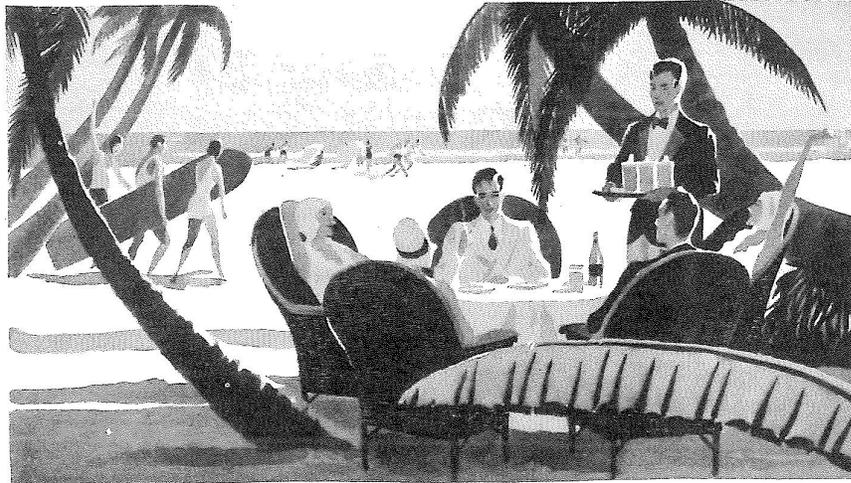


UH... YEAH. I GUESS
YOU'RE RIGHT.

HI, GARRY. YES, THE DNC
APPROVED SUNDAY'S STRIP.
YES, THE FIRST PANEL READS
"I'M JOE BIDEN
AND I
APPROVED
THIS
MESSAGE."



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