

The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

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

New (sort of): Eco Terreno Wines and Vineyards SF Urban Tasting Room now at 140 Columbus in North Beach, where the Purple Onion, that renowned beatnik nightclub used to be.

It's the job of a publication to investigate government corruption in its community. Unfortunately, I'm too lazy to do that. What I suggest you do is pick up a copy of the Marina Times (or visit MarinaTimes.com) and read San Francisco's finest muckraking journalist – Susan Dyer Reynolds. There's also a fairly amusing columnist named John Zipperer. I don't always agree with him, but often his writing elicits chuckles. Not guffaws. But chuckles. Chortles, if you will. Titters. Actually, can you still say that last word in the post-Me Too world? Anyway, check the paper out.

Sad news: Tim Benetti, owner of Bottom of the Hill, that bar/live music venue in Potrero Hill, recently died at age 58. He was paralyzed from the chest down in a car crash in 1987, but kept going. Besides opening the bar he graduated from UC Hastings School of Law in 1989 and worked in legal-related occupations for the city. I never met him, but back around 1995 I used to go to the Sunday barbecues at Bottom of the Hill.

Gee, I can't wait to read this exciting new issue of the SF Herald. James Dylan, cab driving columnist Lee Vilensky, Ace Backwards, and moi. Oh boy – here goes!

Life in Doha, Qatar

By James Dylan

In the January issue I wrote about how I used to write for the Herald twenty years ago, how I rejoined the U.S. Army just before 9/11 happened, about how I was in Iraq for a year, and how I became a civilian contractor for the military after that. I was a contractor in Doha, Qatar.

Life wasn't that bad for me, an American male in Doha, back in 2009. There is an unofficial caste system, with the Qatari's on the top, of course. Then came other Muslims, but only those from rich countries like Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, and then, believe it or not, Westerners.

You would think that all men from Muslim nations would rank higher, but Syrian, Iranian, Omani, and Lebanese men were treated as second class residents. Under the Westerners were the aforementioned group of Muslims, then Filipinos, and at the very bottom were Indians, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, etc. I guess it all came down to money, country of origin, and prestige.



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I worked with a guy, he was a straight-up American from Texas who was as redneck as they came, except he was of Indian descent and looked like Apu from the Simpsons. He talked like G.W. Bush, but looked like he was fresh off the boat from Calcutta. A group of us western men would go to the mall on a Friday night, and the guards would tell us they could let us all in "but our driver would have to stay outside." We thought it was funny as hell, but he would all get pissed off and start raising hell, and even when we told them that he was American, they wouldn't let him in. It sucked for him though, because he had to deal with that shit every day. Even on base, at the American dining facility, he walked in and the Indian manager would yell at him, "What are you doing in here! Go back to your work site!" as if he were an immigrant laborer who wandered accidentally in. When he went out to shop or eat, they always assumed he was a laborer and treated him as such. He resigned when his one-year contract was up, and I don't blame him.

I had no issues with most Qatari men, as most were friendly and seemed like they wanted to talk with Americans, and wanted to show off their country to us. I've had conversations with many Qatari men who said they studied and had homes in the USA, and even asked how the Packers or Yankees were doing this season!

Most were friendly, with quite a few on the arrogant side, but overall no problems. Except once when some young, douchebag Qatari men were brake-checking me and trying to cut me off on the road, just acting like assholes. I pulled into a nearby parking lot, and they pulled up behind me and blocked me in. I got out and grabbed a golf club, ready to throw down, but when they saw I was an American they looked shocked, became apologetic and started laughing, saying "My friend, my friend, no problem! Just making fun!" and they took off.

Qataris look down on manual labor... for themselves. Actually, they look down on almost any kind of labor. My wife heard a lot of stories from other Filipinas who worked as

domestic servants. One story was the Qatari lady of the house calling her maid on the phone to come to the living room and bring her the glass of water that was on the counter 10 feet away, because she didn't want to get up and get it herself. Qatar is having a major obesity and diabetes epidemic, because most of them don't do anything.

To own a business in Qatar is fine, but not to work at it. What they do is sponsor someone who wants to open a business, and take 51% ownership of it, so that they are the primary owner. Then, they let the other guy (Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, etc.) run it as he sees fit. The Qatari takes his cut, but most times he will have very little to do with actually running the business. The Qatari also has to "sponsor" his business partner, and he takes his passport so the person can't leave.

Most of the rich Middle Eastern countries had domestic workers, like nannies, maids, cooks, drivers, handymen, gardeners, etc. And despite most of these families being super rich, they refused to pay the staff hardly anything. My own wife worked as a nanny for the Omani ambassador to Bahrain back in the early '90s, and she was a beloved member of that household.

They lived in a huge mansion, and she took care of the three children; clothing them, feeding them, bathing them, playing with them, and she was paid... \$50 a month. Adjusted for inflation, let's say \$75, or even \$100. She worked most days, even on her alleged "day off." After one year, the family was outraged when she told them she was quitting, and couldn't understand her "betrayal." She told them why she was quitting, and all they had to do was increase her salary to a decent living wage (\$250?), but they just couldn't do it. Oh, they could throw elaborate parties with bands and performers and even have celebrities show up, but to pay a "cherished member of the family" a decent salary was asking too much.

Most Western contractors had girlfriends in Doha, most of them Filipina. Allah forbid you look at a local Qatari woman, or dare speak to one. One time, however, a friend told me he was just sitting in a mall, and a Qatari woman in a burka walked by and dropped a slip of paper in front of him and walked off. My friend opened it and she had written "I like you, do you want to meet up?" with a phone number. We all decided it would probably be a bad idea for him to follow through on that one.

Here's my final memory of Qatar: In 2009, I slowly turned right on a red light, and the flash of a camera went off. I thought that was odd, since you are allowed to turn right on red in Qatar. I didn't think anything of it until I received a ticket for \$2500 from the authorities.

Of course, I went to our local "fixer" and we appealed the ticket, saying I was only turning

right, not running the light. Praise Allah, they reviewed it and the ticket was dismissed! I was given a slip of paper in Arabic, and didn't think about it again.

Then, in June, we received word that the US military would be withdrawing from Iraq, and that our contract would be ending in a month. My boss told me to tie up any loose ends, say my goodbyes, and be ready to leave. A few days later, he called me into his office saying the Qataris wouldn't issue me an exit visa because I had an unpaid traffic ticket that first needed to be settled.

My boss, the fixer, and I went to the DMV and explained the situation to them, and I showed them my dismissal slip. They said yes, the ticket had been dismissed, there was nothing they could do. We told them I couldn't get an exit visa because the immigration department said I had a ticket! DMV said it might take a while for the charge to be dismissed from the system, but eventually it would disappear.

We left, and a few days later, my boss called me back, saying the US government was asking why I still didn't have an exit visa, as per the contract, I had to be off the base, out of our housing, and out of the country at the end of the month. My boss explained everything, and the government told him to tell me to just pay the \$2500 so I could leave! The alternative would be that they would simply escort me off base with my suitcase with no place to stay, and no vehicle.

Seeing little alternative, the fixer and I actually went to the DMV and again explained my situation and said I would just like to pay the ticket. The DMV clerk said I didn't have to pay the ticket, as it was dismissed! Now, the fixer and the clerk went at it in Arabic for several minutes, shouting and dramatically pulling their hair, beating their chests, praying to Allah... all to no avail. The clerk said that even if he DID take my money, he would be unable to process the fee because the original ticket had already been dismissed! It was just still in the system and hadn't been purged yet.

So, I have the US government yelling at my company, which in turn was yelling at me, to pay a \$2500 ticket that was a mistake, and anyway had already been dismissed, so I couldn't pay it if I tried. And I was about to be dropped off in downtown Doha with no apartment or car, and abandoned. I went back one more time and told my boss and even the government rep all of this, and I basically received the generic "I don't care" response, "just fix it."

Actually, I received more of an order to go back and demand to pay it, in the hope that it would somehow force the ticket to go away. So in the end, yes, I went and paid \$2500 for a ticket that was a mistake, a camera error. But it DID work, the ticket was purged, even though the clerk said I couldn't pay it.

That was during my last week in Doha, and I've never been back, and found it a fitting departure from one of the worst countries in the world.###

Email: contactjdvlan@yahoo.com

Herald Archives: Early 2000s

Advice for \$5.10

By Lee Vilensky

I pick up this guy just west of the B'way tunnel, on a medium slow, Wednesday night. He's a tall, handsome, well-groomed man in his early thirties. He smells nice.

"I'm just going through the tunnel to B'way and Montgomery."

"O.K."

"Yeah, I just started managing a new men's club called 'Boys' Toys'."

"Oh yeah, I've seen that. That building used to be 'The Stone', a heavy metal club."

"Right. You should see it now. It's beautiful. Lots of dark wood, and chrome, brand new, state of the art kitchen, amazing sound system! And they're bringing in some of the most beautiful centerfolds in the country,... in the world!"

"Alright."

"You wanna come in for a drink? You can be my guest."

"No thanks, I've got to keep working.

Don't want to break my rhythm."

"I understand. You ever want to come in just ask for me, Jim. I'll comp you."

"Thanks Jim."

"Anytime. Hey, if you get any customers looking for an upscale, men's club, with great food, bring 'em by. We also have a full bar with an impressive wine list. We're really the classiest club in town."

"Hence the classy name, 'Boys' Toys'."

"You don't like the name?"

"Not really."

"What's wrong with it?"

"Probably nothing. It's just my personal tastes....it's fine."

"No really, what wrong with it? I'm interested in your opinion. I think cab drivers really have their fingers on the pulse of the city, and are an excellent source of information."

"You think I have my finger on the pulse of the city?"

"Yes I do."

"O.K. Well what I don't like about the name 'Boys' Toys' is,... it's not a classy enough name to attract the type of clientele you're gearing the club towards. It's kind of sneaky sexist. The attempt to be clever falls flat. It also sounds like it could be the other kind of men's club, if you get my drift."

"I don't think the name would turn anyone off. I mean, after all, it is a titty bar we're talking about here."

"Exactly, so why soft pedal the product. Tell it like it is. 'Boys' Toys' is crass,

without being honest. Either have a name that has nothing to do with sex, and let word-of-mouth attract customers, or have a name that spells it out. Do you think you can fool these CEO's you're trying to get into the club? These people are not stupid and they appreciate honesty in advertising."

"O.K., what would you name the club?"

"I don't know."

"No really. You're so free with advice. I'm sure you have some ideas, and I'd love to hear them."

"See, now you're mad. Forget it."

I pull up to the club and the man gets out and reaches into his pocket for money. It's \$4.90 on the meter and he gives me a ten.

"Hey Doctor, I'm really not mad at all. I was just curious about your ideas for a name. Who knows, we may change the name someday."

He's staring at me through the open passenger side door, waiting. I know he thinks his gratuity obliges me to come up with something. He's mad. Sneaky mad.

"Well, how 'bout, 'Whores N Food'".

Man laughs. "You're a funny guy. Don't you have a serious suggestion?"

"That is a serious suggestion."

"You've got to be fucking kidding me! 'Whores And Food'! That's your idea for a replacement to 'Boys' Toys'?"

"Sure, why not?"

"Why not! Because it's ridiculous. It's....idiotic. You're really a wise-ass, you know that."

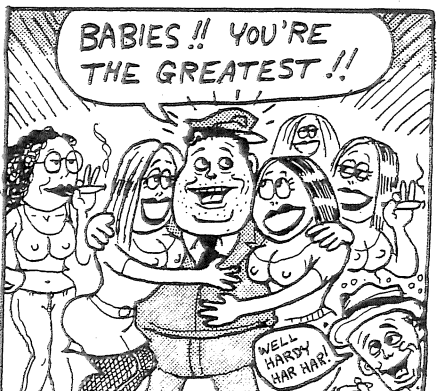
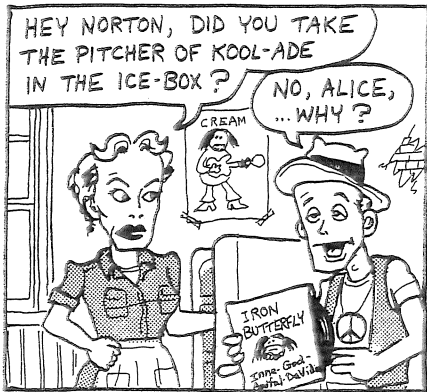
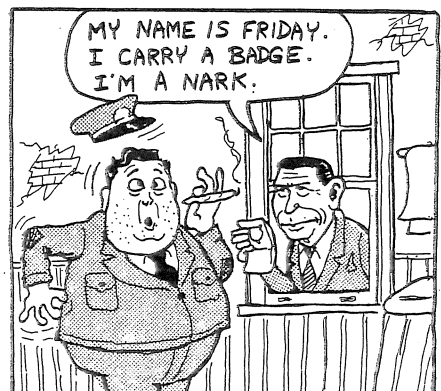
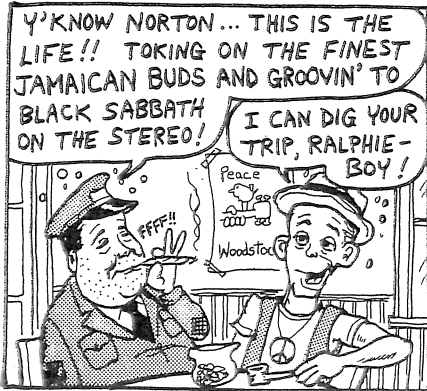
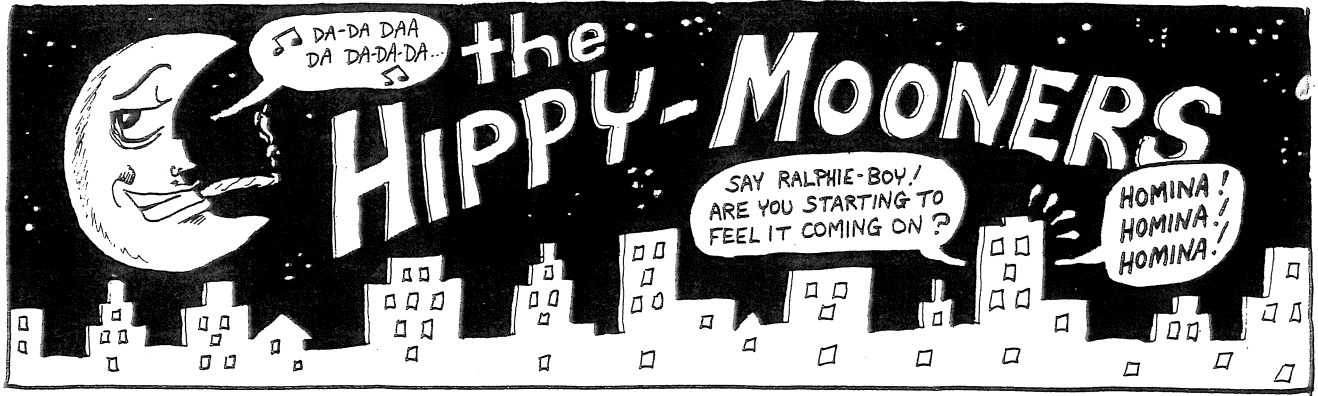
The man is now yelling, and two of the bouncer/security guys come over to see what's going on. They're wearing tuxedos and staring at me through the open passenger door. I start thinking that "Boys' Toys" isn't such a bad name after all, but I'm in too far to turn back.

"It's honest! Refreshingly honest. High rollers will respond to itshonesty. Dinettes N' Stools, Beverages N' more, Whores N' Food. Come on!"

"You know what? I don't think so. Why don't you move along, you're in the passenger zone."

Having said this, the man, closes the passenger door, and walks towards the club. I open the front, passenger-side window and yell, "O.K., HOW 'BOUT SOMETHING WITH A GERMAN THEME LIKE, 'CLITSUNDLAGER'?"

He turns around, looks at me, then says something to the bouncers, who have also moved back onto the sidewalk. They make quick movements towards the cab, and I take off. I really thought "Whores N Food" was a good name. I'm not so sure about "ClitsundLager."###



GOOD CLEAN FUN
WRITTEN, DRAWN, & ©2023
BY GENE MAHONEY

THERE SURE ARE
A LOT OF
WEIRDOES
IN THIS WORLD.
(AND THEY ALL LIVE
IN SAN FRANCISCO.)

HELLO, SAN FRANCISCO!
I'LL BE FILLING IN AS
MAYOR LONDON BREED'S
PRESS SECRETARY TODAY.

I NEED NO INTRODUCTION...

I AM CHANTEUSE...
FORMER HOST OF
"O' GAY CAN YOU SEE:
HOMOPHOBIA IN AMERIKA"
ON KPFA RADIO IN BERKELEY
AS WELL AS FORMER BATH-HOUSE
EDITOR FOR THE DEFUNCT
NEWSPAPER,
THE
SAN FRANCISCO
BAY GUARDIAN.

HOW DOES THE MAYOR FEEL
ABOUT SUPERVISOR MATT DORSEY'S
PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO
DEPORT ILLEGAL ALIENS
CONVICTED OF SELLING
FENTANYL HERE?

IT OBVIOUSLY REEKS OF THE
NAZI-LIKE TRUMP ERA MINDSET
OF ACTUALLY ENFORCING EXISTING
IMMIGRATION LAWS.
SAN FRANCISCO IS ALL ABOUT
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.
SO WE STILL WELCOME ILLEGALS
WHO SELL METH, CRACK, AND HEROIN.

OXFORD JUST CONDUCTED THE
MOST COMPREHENSIVE SCIENTIFIC
STUDY ON COVID MASKS EVER AND
CONCLUDED THEY DON'T MAKE
ANY DIFFERENCE STOPPING THE VIRUS.
DOES THE MAYOR REGRET HER
MASK MANDATE POLICY?

OXFORD? WHAT'S THAT?
SOME RIGHT-WING GROUP?
ARE YOU WITH FOX NEWS?

IF LOCKING DOWN A CITY, AND
FORCING PEOPLE TO WEAR MASKS
DID NO GOOD, WE REJECT THAT.
IT'S NOT "OUR TRUTH."

HEY, DID EVERYONE ENJOY THE
CHINESE NEW YEAR'S PARADE?
THOSE BIG BALLOONS INSTEAD OF
FLOATS WERE A NICE TOUCH.

AND HUNTER BIDEN MADE A
GREAT GRAND MARSHAL!

SORRY, FOLKS!
YOU CAN'T PUT OUT
SOMETHING DECENT
EVERY MONTH.
(AT LEAST I CAN'T.)
SEE YA NEXT TIME!

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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.