

The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

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

Love These Flowers is a new florist at 542-B Mason, near Sutter... New art gallery at 909 Sutter (at Leavenworth) owned by John James Hartford V (yes, the Fifth!). That may be a real New England blueblood type name, but John's a San Mateo boy. The new gallery is called Vanitas Contemporary. Slowbender Gallery used to be there.

So Gavin Newsom survived the recall election. Maybe he celebrated at the French Laundry in Napa. He won handily, too. As Mark Steyn recently mused about how we just accept these politicians telling us to live our lives one way while they live theirs the opposite way: It's amazing how many Americans are content to be subjects rather than citizens... Apologies to Lee Vilensky for editing his original article for length this issue. It was just a few lines. Actually, if I didn't publish this apology it would have fit.

The Half Moon Bay City Council canceled the annual Pumpkin Festival again. The festival is outdoors, a few feet from the ocean and in San Mateo County, where as of October 4th, 95.3% of the population over 16 has been vaccinated and there are 16 current Covid hospitalizations. It's not their fault, though. We keep voting these people into office.

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There was a fairly interesting article in the September 10th issue of the Palo Alto Weekly. It was titled "Searching For Their Father's Killer" by Sue Dremann. It was about this guy who was raised in Palo Alto and married young to his high school sweetheart in 1961, and had a son and daughter shortly after. He was the West Coast regional manager for Cowles Media and in his off time worked on art projects and drove his hot rods.

By 1965 the marriage faltered and the guy moved to San Francisco, let his slicked back hair grow long, and got a job working the light shows at rock concerts promoted by Bill Graham. In 1967 he was arrested for giving his underage girlfriend a beer. In jail he befriended his cellmate who had an extensive rap sheet for petty and violent crime. Afterwards, the guy started selling marijuana in North Beach neighborhood bars, and his former cellmate started threatening him. The guy ended up getting stabbed to death in the stairwell to his upstairs apartment on Grant Avenue, above the Grant & Green bar. Years later his son and daughter investigate what happened. You can find the article at PaloAltoOnline.com.

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VIENI VIENI - LUCKY SPOT

By Lee Vilensky

It was 10:45 on a slow-ass Sunday night, and I was up \$87. I say "up" because you can actually lose money driving a cab and be "down", what with \$85 gates, and \$17 gas bills. I started my shift at 4:30p.m., approximately 100 bucks in the hole, so I was pretty much thrilled with \$87. I figured I'd make one more pass through North Beach and call it a night. Jump on the freeway, gas up, and turn in the cab. I had a 26-year-old Amerasian girl waiting for me at home.

I cruised down Columbus, turned right on Stockton, and was flagged by a woman holding onto a man. They were both drunk. The woman was a bartender, and the man was a bar patron who'd been in a fight. She explained to me that the man had gotten mouthy with some biker type, and was beaten to the floor, then kicked in the jaw. She wanted me to take him to the ER, the last thing I wanted to do on a slow-ass Sunday, up \$87. There was no way around it.

The man had taken a savage beating. The left side of his face was blown up like a balloon, and his left eye was completely shut. He had specks of blood all over his face and clothes. It looked like someone had dipped a brush in red paint, and flicked it at him repeatedly. Incidentally, the name of the bar was Vieni Vieni - Lucky Spot.

Lucky for some, I guess.

The man got his big head into the cab, and told me to take him to the Hotel St. Paul, so he could get his Blue Cross card. Apparently everyone had medical coverage, except me. He had me wait, then directed me to St. Luke's Hospital. On the way we stopped at a liquor store for a 16 oz. Budweiser. Mid-journey he started laughing then announced, "My jaw is numb. Wanna Vicodin?"

"Sure." I took it for later.

"I've been in that bar since one o'clock this afternoon. I'm a merchant seaman, 22

years. What do you do?"

"I drive a cab."

"I got hit HARD in that bar back there. Where you from?"

"South Jersey, near Philly."

"No shit, I'm from Philly!"

There was a lull in the conversation, so I told him that my mother grew up in Philadelphia, and went to Overbrook High School around the same time as Wilt Chamberlain.

"No shit, 'Wilt the Stilt'. I read his book. Said he slept with 10,000 women in his life."

"Yeah, I read his book, too."

"So wadda you think? Your mom was like number 7 or 8?"

"I can see why you got hit in that bar."

"Man, I got hit HARD. Who was your favorite Philly in 1964?"

"That's a tie between Johnny Callison, and Richie Allen."

"My face feels funny. Does it look bad?"

"Pretty bad, but you'll live. You should avoid bars for a while, and/or try being nicer to people that you meet."

"I know, I know. I'm a real dick when I'm drinking. Wasn't Johnny Callison 'Rookie of the Year' in 1963?"

"No, but Richie Allen was in '64."

"Richie Allen was what?"

"'Rookie of the Year', 1964."

"No shit."

I pulled into the ER entrance and the guy couldn't get out. I went and got an orderly with a wheelchair, and we both maneuvered him out of the cab.

I wheeled him into the waiting room and all conversation stopped. His face was now so swollen that his head was lopsided. A big, cartoon head with various shadings of green, yellow, and purple. He was the "Star of the Night," and even the admitting nurse stared. As I was leaving, he grabbed my hand and said,

"Bro, my face don't feel right."

"Don't worry, the docs will fix you up."

"Alright. Thanks for puttin' up with my bullshit. I'll buy you a drink sometime."

Then he palmed me a Vicodin. I took it for later.###

John Lennon

By Ace Backwords

(Part Four)

John Lennon most definitely wanted to have a pronounced effect on his audience, of that you can be certain. He admitted as much many times. Part of it was just the old Show Biz axiom: "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry." But Lennon put a little something extra into the soup this time. A whole 'nother dimension. With this drug, LSD, that permanently changes people's brains and "you're never the same again." And Lennon got more than he bargained for. For Lennon did, in fact, effect many, many people with his little amateur brain-surgery act. But he wanted no part of the *after-effect*. Oh boy. Because he fucked up a good many people, just as surely as Timothy Leary did, with the exact same horseshit.

Lennon, of course, always wanted it both ways. Preening in the spotlight and glorying in the "positive" effect he was supposedly having on the world (I think he created world peace). But he wanted no part of the other side of the bargain. And any interviewer that dared to ask Lennon if he felt any "responsibility" for the effect he had on his fans was met with a curt: No. Next question.

In one of his last interviews with NEWSWEEK magazine, the reporter referred to The Beatles as "custodians of our childhood." Lennon wanted no part of that line of questioning and got very curt with the reporter. Perhaps because Lennon knew he wasn't the kind of human being that you'd want to entrust with your child.

Of course an artist can't be held responsible for the crazy interpretations that nutty people project onto their work. The famous serial-killer, David "Son of Sam" Berkowitz, claimed that the Bible told him to go out and kill women. Does that mean the Bible's to blame? Hardly. On the other hand, does that mean the artist has NO responsibility? Hardly. In fact, if you get behind the loudest media microphone known to man and scream "FIRE!" in a crowded movie theatre, you most definitely will be held responsible for the results. And if thousands of people get trampled in the ensuing chaos, it hardly cuts it to say:

"Well, I *thought* there was a fire (but now that I've debunked that false notion, let me give you the *real* story)."

Or even worse: "I was just *kidding*. I really wasn't serious all along, so it was your own mistake for taking me seriously. I just did it for a joke 'cuz I get a big kick out of seeing people trampling each other."

Well, make no mistake about this: John Lennon got behind the loudest media microphone known to man and screamed: "DRUGS!" in the loudest possible voice. To

millions of young fans. So it was inevitable that, like, certain, ahem, *problems* would ensue. In his last famous PLAYBOY interview, Lennon likened The Beatles role in the '60s to that of navigators up in the crow's nest of the ship, yelling "Land ho!"

But what if what you *thought* was "land ho" actually turned out to be "big- cliff-leading-to-a-hundred-foot-waterfall ho"?

Debunk *that*, Johnny baby.

"Well, I could've SWORN that it was 'land ho' but it turned out to be 'big cliff' ho. I guess I was mistaken. I guess it was all just a darn hallucination from a psychedelic drug. Imagine that."

For a guy who talked incessantly about the word "karma," instant or otherwise, John Lennon seemed to be tragically ill informed as to how the Lords of Karma actually operate.

"That's what I'm trying to do on my albums and interviews. I'm trying to influence all the people I can influence," bragged John Lennon in an interview with the radical paper Red Mole. "In a way The Beatles turned out to be a Trojan Horse. The Fab Four moved right to the top and then sang about drugs and sex."

And in a way, The Beatles *were* like a Trojan Horse. And we all know how the Trojan Horse story ended. Just like we all know how the '60 ended.

But at least to their credit, The Beatles put their money where their mouths-full-of-LSD were. Inspired by their utopian psychedelic visions, The Beatles formed their own company, Apple Records, as a vehicle to spread peace and love and artistic grooviness in a business setting. But God help the poor fool who tries to take those utopian LSD brain-bubbles and transfer them to the real world. And it wasn't long before The Beatles' hare-brained pipe-dreams had pushed them to the brink of bankruptcy. Typical of their psychedelic business acumen was a guy name Alex Vardas. "Magic Alex," as Lennon dubbed him, was a self-proclaimed "electronics genius." He invented a "light box" with colored lights that blinked of-and-on in different patterns. Lennon would stare at the "light box" for hours while tripping on acid and have all sorts of Profound Realizations. Which convinced Lennon that Magic Alex was a true genius. So The Beatles gave Alex thousands and thousands of dollars to design a state-of-the-art, 72-track recording studio. "It was the biggest disaster of all time, the whole thing had to be ripped out," said George.

George Harrison actually made it over to Haight Ashbury during the fabled Summer of Love of '67. John wanted to go, but he never quite made it. "I was all for going and living in the Haight," said Lennon of those heady days of the Summer of Love. "In my head I thought, 'Acid is it, and let's go, I'll go there.'"

Anyways, George was expecting a "village of hippie artisans and craftsmen." So he was surprised (uh, duh) to find out the Haight circa 1967 was actually "a skid row full of spotty kids on drugs." He was also shocked and disturbed to find out that the hippie kids all treated him like he was a guru (where did they ever get THAT idea?). George, who was tripping on acid at the time, had a terrible bumper, and fled the Haight in terror. The Beatles would do a lot of fleeing from that point on, fleeing from the Hippie Monster that they had helped to create.

After Charles Manson it was all over for John Lennon and The Beatles and they knew it. "It all went wrong at that point. What can you do?" said Paul, sadly.

"It stopped everybody in their tracks," noted Ringo.

The writing was on the wall. Literally. And I suppose if somebody had taken *my* poetry and splattered it in blood all over somebody's wall, I guess that would give me pause, too. The combination of "Beatles" and "LSD mysticism" -- which, for that one shining moment in 1967 had seemed so promising, had seemed to open a door of possibilities into a whole new universe -- had turned tragically and irrevocably awry. Bye-bye to the great LSD Dream. John Lennon -- the great counterculture hippie leader -- would spend the rest of his life in absolute fear and terror of "hippie types." And of "nutter Beatle fans." And especially "nutter Beatle fans who looked like hippie-types."

"One of these nutter fans is gonna get me someday," he moaned to his girlfriend May Pang in 1973.

Charles Manson was just the most spectacular of the many "nutter Beatle fans." There were many, many more. These were the people that John Lennon had profoundly and gleefully effected with his little amateur brain surgery operation. And many of these fans would come back later looking for John, anxious to return the favor. And finally, it would be one of those nutter fans, Mark Chapman, who came back to finish him off. Lennon repeatedly told Fred Seaman of his premonition that he would die a violent death. "John had told me that deep down he was an extremely violent man," wrote Seaman. "John said that he assumed that because he had led a life filled with violence, both in thought and in deed, he was destined to die a violent death."

John Lennon knew all too well who he was. Even if most of his fans would never guess. As he admitted in his last interview in PLAYBOY magazine: "It's always the violent ones who are always going on about peace. Everything is the opposite of what it seems."

And that was certainly the case with John Lennon. But, as usual, Lennon's "refreshing candor" was a little too little, and a little too late.###

-To be continued-

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