

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: **New:** CC Nail Spa at 1472 California. Sweet Glory Dessert Café at 721 Larkin (nice service, they called me “sir”). Wasabi & Ginger at 2299 Van Ness. Rasoio barber shop at 521 Columbus. **Coming soon:** Niche & Nook Flowers at 2044 Polk. A new bar is opening, probably in February, where The Summer Place was at Bush & Mason. **Now:** Comedy night at Mayes Oyster House on Wednesdays.

Happy Holidays from all of us here! (Man, I really knocked myself out writing this month’s column. *Whew!* Vacation time.)

Herald Archives: 2011

The Masseuse from Hell

By James Dylan

So here I am, an “on-location” reporter for the San Francisco Herald on Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan (actually I’m just a civilian contractor, but reporter sounds more intriguing.) My days off are pretty boring, since there isn’t all that much to do around here except sit in the Kenyan Coffee Shop near the PX or go to the gym and try to lose my gut. I chose the gym, and after having not been to a gym for some time, was a little out of shape. Lifting weights, I pulled a neck muscle that kept me awake nights and bothered me all day. I was happy when I heard that the local barbershop also offered massages, so I called and made an appointment for later that evening.

A quick word about the businesses here on base; with the exception of AAFES, which is the “post exchange”, or government run shopping center, all businesses are considered vendors and are run privately, with AAFES getting a cut of the profits, of course. The barbershop was no exception. Or should I call it “barbershop/beauty salon/spa”? It is run by a Kyrgyzstani guy who brought in a whole group of Kyrgyzstani women. A 50-minute full body massage is \$20, a pretty good deal, although you have to remember these aren’t professional masseuses.

I showed up for my appointment and when my name was called, was greeted at the counter by a semi-attractive 30-something year old blonde whose name I wouldn’t dare try to pronounce, so I’ll call her Nina. She said “Hello, follow me” and led me down a short hallway with rooms on either side, partitioned off by sheets. One could hear voices form behind the curtains, mostly men talking and women giggling.



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Nina pulled a sheet aside at her partition and I followed her in, and I mentioned, trying to be humorous (warning; this usually never works with me and leads to disaster) that I wanted a real, hard massage and asked if she was strong enough, as she was petite and thin as a rail.

She looked offended and without even asking “What kind of massage would you like?” or “Do you have any specific area you’d like me to focus on?” or even a “Take your shirt off and lay down”, she looks at me and points to a small stand next to the massage table with a crisp \$20 bill lying on it. “You give me good tip, yes? I give you good massage.”

Being a well-traveled backpacker, this wasn’t a big shock to be asked for a tip before any service is even rendered, but I decided to have a little fun. I acted a little shocked and said:

“You know, in my country it’s rude to ask for a tip, especially before you even give the massage. Normally when someone asks for a tip, you don’t give them one. It’s considered begging.”

Well, that pissed her off.

“What? Why you yell at me? Why you mean to me? Why you say I’m not strong? Why you insult me?”

Well, this was going downhill fast.

I offered: “Like I said, I don’t tip people who ask for tips. You could ask after the massage, or even casually bring it up near the end of the massage, but you don’t ask before the massage.” I always tip, and was planning on it, but to be asked before makes me not want to tip.

I suppose she thought she was at risk of losing a client, so she changed her strategy and started giving me a sob story about how she only works for tips, and so many people don’t tip, and I don’t have to yell at her and be mean, etc. She started giving me puppy-dog eyes.

Suddenly I realized what was going on. I was on an Army base filled with thousands of young, horny GI’s, and she was used to flirting or teasing them into getting tips, and most of the guys probably went along with it. I, on the other hand, was simply interested in getting a no-nonsense massage.

I took my shirt off and lay face down on the massage table and told her about the knot in my neck. I thought I would let the bad intro go and just try to focus on the massage, but she started in with the guilt trip right away.

“I’m from Kyrgyzstan, and I have 5 kids and they don’t pay me anything here, we only work for tips and many people, they no tip, and why you yell at me, and why you say I’m no strong...” on and on and on.

At first I tried talking rationally and calmly, saying I never insulted her, that instead she insulted me, insinuating that I wouldn’t tip her, that she didn’t need to tell me I needed to tip. But she wasn’t having any of it. Soon, I started getting pissed. When she brought up the “I have 5 kids” thing again, I said, “Well, maybe you shouldn’t have 5 kids if you don’t have any money, like you said. You know what birth control is, don’t you?” I also had to ask her to start massaging me, not just softly rubbing oil on my back as if I asked her to apply sunscreen on me.

“You not like other Americans, are you? I been here long time, other American nice, you not nice.”

“No, I’m nice, you just have a distorted view of Americans because 99% of the other guys who come in here are hoping to get laid and are more interested in flirting with you than getting a massage. I’ve no interest in you other than getting a massage. I don’t want your phone number. You have no idea who I am and you know nothing about me. I’m a very nice person; you’re just distorting everything I say.”

I’m guessing most guys go there simply to get touched by a girl, as that’s all she was doing, running her fingers through my hair and running her hands up and down my back.

“I’d give you my phone number if you asked me.”

Then I just got tired of it all. The whole massage was pretty much ruined by now. I had planned relax and enjoy it, but she was complaining non-stop. It wouldn’t have been so bad if she was just speaking softly like other masseuses I’ve had, but with this one it was all about how little she is paid, how many kids she has, how no one tips, how mean I am, how different I am from other Americans, etc. I couldn’t imagine being married to her, much less living in a house with her and 5 kids.

Finally I sat up and just said “Do you want to stop? I mean, neither of us seem to be having a good time. All I want is a massage for this knot in my neck. Can we stop?”

She said "Fine." But instead of stopping she pushed my head down into the table and actually shut up and started massaging me, and strongly, too. Ah, heaven.

She found that knot in my neck and started focusing on it, and the pain started. She was really kneading it, and it hurt so much I thought she was digging into it with her fingernails. I actually cried out and moved my head away. I'm guessing she was doing it on purpose, trying to make it painful. My masculine pride kicked in and I refused to give her the pleasure of crying out again; I just bit the towel under my head.

Then she asked me a strange question, right out of the blue.

"Do you have any diseases?"

This went on for the rest of the massage, until finally she stopped and walked out of the room. My neck was still in pain, this time from her and not the knot. She came back and opened the curtain and was standing there with another Kyrgyz girl, looking at me and talking about me, neither smiling.

I went and grabbed my shirt and caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror; the whole right side of my neck was swollen like a water balloon and there was a huge black spot where the knot was. I walked over and showed it to her friend, who put her hand over her mouth and said something to my Nazi masseuse.

I said "Do you still think you deserve a tip? You know, I could go to your boss and show him this and complain and you'd be on the next plane back to Bishkek. But despite what you think, I'm not a mean person, as you called me."

Her friend said something mean to her and I just walked off and paid my \$20 at the front desk.

Interestingly, when the male cashier (the boss) asked for the \$20 and I gave it to him, he simply slid it into the drawer and didn't ring it up in the register. I asked for a receipt and he looked shocked.

"You want receipt?"

"Yes!"

He rolled his eyes and rang up \$20 and gave me a receipt. I guess I was cutting into his profit, as I knew he had to give AAFES ten or twenty percent. I asked him how much the girls make, and without hesitation, he said, "\$110 a month, plus tips." I told him that didn't seem like very much, especially since a massage was \$20. If a girl gave 6 massages a day, the company earned her monthly payment. The rest was pure profit for the vendor? There were 8 partitions in the back, 4 on each side, and there were a lot of guys in the waiting area. That guy must have been making tens of thousands of dollars a month, which is millions in Kyrgyzstan.

I didn't mention anything about the huge bruise to the boss.###



John Lennon

By Ace Backwards

(Part Six)

Of course, the problem with delusions of grandeur is: The higher you go, the farther you can fall. And Lennon would fall a very long way.

"Lennon had a rage in him that was with him every day of his life," said peace promoter John Brower, who saw enough of the behind-the-scenes John Lennon to know.

Shortly after the non-peace Festival, Lennon cracked up for good and never recovered. Lennon enrolled in Primal Scream therapy and screamed and screamed and screamed (he had much to scream about).

"John had about as much pain as I'd ever seen in my life," said Dr. Arthur Janov, the founder of Primal Scream therapy. "LSD is the most devastating thing for mental health that ever existed. To this day, we see people who've been on LSD, and they have a different brain-wave pattern, as if their defenses are totally broken down. It stays. I think Timothy Leary destroyed so many people by touting LSD. It's a very dangerous drug."

In 1971 John Lennon took one last pathetic stab at the Great Youth Leader role he so craved. But this time he cleverly lowered his standards from that of World Spiritual Teacher to mere nuts-and-bolts Revolutionary Radical Political Leader. "*The Working Class Hero*" himself, John Lennon.

So now we had the grotesque tableau of the millionaire Rock Star making his impassioned speeches "in support of the exploited workers of the world." And then, in the very

next breath, screaming and cursing out his personal gofer for not supplying his latest luxury items in a timely fashion. Sheesh.

To further the Revolution, Lennon hooked up with Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, the two great political acid heroes of the '60s. And these were the kind of men that Lennon (that great follower at heart) felt would lead America to its glorious, revolutionary future in the post-60s world.

Now Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin are absolutely typical of the strange dichotomy between the public and private lives of so many of these '60s figures. They don't know how to wipe their own asses, and yet they're eager to teach *other people* how to clean up the World's shit.

In his later years, Abbie Hoffman was working on his next book, something along the lines of "*How to Successfully Deal with Manic-Depression*." I'm sure it would've been another great book from ole' Ab, filled with his priceless wisdom and solid advice for mankind. Except Abbie Hoffman committed suicide halfway through writing it.

Jerry Rubin was another one. After stirring up endless shit in the '60s, Rubin concluded in the '70s -- after having attained profound realizations through EST therapy -- that his whole Big Man On Campus act had merely been his attempt to "compensate for having a little penis." And thanks for the insights, Jer'. Later, the great '60s Leader would get run over by a car and die while jaywalking in the middle of a busy street in Los Angeles. (And no, I'm not making this shit up, believe me.)

So anyways, the new improved radical hero, John Lennon, started calling press conferences in support of having all the violent criminals in Attica State Penitentiary released from prison. Lennon had only been living in America for about 2 months, and yet he was already ready to completely revamp our criminal-justice system. Whatta' guy.

However, a woman in the audience took offense:

"You are setting up thieves and murderers as heroes!" she yelled. She went on to explain that she, as a native New Yorker, was afraid to walk the streets at nights because of these violent criminals, which is why she wanted them kept in jail.

To which Yoko Ono sagely responded: "I know this sounds corny, but all they need is more love."

Classic John-and-Yoko. Plugging their product *and* saving the world, all in one sound-bite.

Yoko went on to say:

"You can keep them in cages as long as you want, but unless you give them love they'll just become more frustrated and violent."

(A few years later, a violent criminal was threatening to kidnap the Lennons' young son, Sean. John and Yoko immediately contacted the FBI and did everything they could to put the would-be-kidnapper in jail for a very long time. As far as I know, no efforts were made to cure the kidnapper of his criminality with John-and-Yoko's alleged "love." And speaking of Attica State Prison, that's where Mark David Chapman has been held since he was convicted of murdering John Lennon. Yoko Ono has urged prison officials not to parole him.)

On the eve of the 1972 presidential election between Nixon and McGovern, radical Working Class Hero John Lennon convened at Jerry Rubin's hip New York City pad to watch the election returns on TV. When Nixon won by a landslide, Lennon went berserk in a screaming, drunken, coke-fueled rage (are you surprised?). Why, John Lennon wasn't going to get his Revolution after all. Darn, darn, darn. He bitterly denounced all the radicals as "uptight, middle-class Jews!" Why, he debunked the whole lot of them.

John Lennon. Always the deceived, never the deceiver. Always the betrayed, never the betrayer.

It's interesting to compare radical political leader John Lennon to that other great youth leader of the '60s, Bob Dylan.

Bob Dylan (along with Ram Dass, R. Crumb, and maybe one or two others) is one of the few '60s icons to have survived the '60s with his soul reasonably intact. And if you don't believe me, just take a look at the long list of casualties.

Unlike Lennon, who jumped at every opportunity to play at being the great Youth Leader, Dylan wanted no part of the role. "I'm just a *musician*," he constantly protested. "That Woodstock festival was the sum total of all this bullshit."

Dylan got so sick of being pestered by The Woodstock Nation that in 1969 he *purposely* put out the worst album he could, *Self Portrait*, which he, in his own words, "loaded up with crap." Even made it a double-album to really load up the hooley. Then he spent about 10 minutes slapping together a painting for the cover art. "I wanted to do something they can't *possibly* like, they can't relate to. So these people would just forget about me."

Compare that attitude to John Lennon. In his famous PLAYBOY interview, Lennon repeatedly stated that he wasn't a "leader," and that his fans had no right to expect him to be one (*where did they ever get that idea?*). And yet, in the very next breath, Yoko Ono stated:

"People like (President) Carter represent only their country. John and I represent the world."

Or in other words, John-and-Yoko are World Leaders far beyond the scope of mere American presidents. God, what hopeless

bullshit-artists and double-talkers they were, John-and-Yoko.

Anyways, shortly after Lennon debunked Jerry Rubin and all them "phony" radicals, Lennon moved to Los Angeles for his famous "Lost Weekend" period, and screamed some more, this time in public. Basically, Lennon went completely berserk, as was his life-long pattern, in an orgy of alcohol and drugs and mindless violence.

He almost strangled to death his girlfriend May Pang, leaving deep red welts around her neck.

He almost killed his guitarist, little Jesse Ed Davis, when he bashed ole Jes' over the head with a big slab ashtray and knocked him unconscious.

He broke another musician's tooth in another berserk, drunken rage.

And he bit a chunk out of another guy's nose and broke his saxophone. Party on, dude. ROCK 'N ROLL!

Lennon speculated to May Pang as to the possible cause of his drunken rages, and the crazy nightmare zone he slipped into whenever he got drunk: "I think it might be caused by all the acid I did in the '60s."

Later, of course, Lennon would debunk this notion, claiming he'd never met anyone personally who had been adversely affected by acid. Oh really? Maybe Lennon should've started by looking in the mirror. But here's some typical Lennon double-talk on the subject: "I never met anybody who's had a flashback in my life and I took million of trips in the '60s, and I never met anybody who had any problems." . . . "All the garbage about what it did to people is garbage." . . . "The only ones who jumped out of windows because of it were the ones in the army. I never knew anybody who jumped out of a window or killed themselves because of it."

George Harrison, who could never spout the double-talk with the adroitness of Lennon's tongue, pointed out the obvious when surveying the wreckage of the COUNTLESS acid-casualties from the '60s: "There were always reports of people jumping under cars and out of buildings (on LSD). I can understand that, because you do suddenly experience the soul as free and unbound."

One night during his famous Lost Weekend period, Lennon went completely berserk and demolished every square inch of the house that he and May Pang had been staying at. With the entire house reduced to rubble and nothing left to destroy, Lennon went after the one last reasonably intact object and began pounding on his mattress, pulling out the stuffing and screaming over and over again:

"IT'S ALL ROMAN POLANSKI'S FAULT!!"

May Pang was perplexed by this. They had been out several times, socially, with the

film-director Roman Polanski, and John had been friendly with Polanski and expressed no critical feelings towards him.

But it all made PERFECT sense to anyone who's done hundreds of LSD trips. The acid logic was brutally obvious to any old acid aficionado. For acid transports you to this strange and ancient realm inhabited by gods and angels and demons, and symbolic archetypes; the denizens of the most peculiar occult netherworld. Roman Polanski, of course, was famous for making the film "*Rosemary's Baby*" about a young woman who gets impregnated by Satan and delivers Satan's child. Later, Charles Manson and his LSD-crazed Beatlemaniacs would satanically rip the unborn child out of Polanski's wife's womb, ruining The Beatles great '60s dream in the process.

The "*connections*." It was all crystal-clear to John Lennon. It was Roman Polanski's fault. He was the one who had opened up the whole door of Satanism and evil in the first place, thinking he could play around with the subject like a dilettante film-director. And NOW look what has happened! You just shouldn't go messing around behind those dark doors, Roman . . .

And even more "coincidental." The apartment where Lennon lived in New York, entombed and imprisoned by his fame, was the famous Dakota Apartments, the eerie, gothic cathedral that Polanski had used as the backdrop for the film "*Rosemary's Baby*." The "*connections*." . . . It was all clear to John Lennon. The silvery, ethereal connections. And the dark shadow that was wrapping itself tighter and tighter around Lennon's world.

The next morning when Lennon woke up and surveyed the wreckage he had wrought on the household, he noticed that he had also destroyed one of his *own* guitars.

"In all these years, this is the first time that I've ever destroyed any of me own stuff," said Lennon, sadly, holding his head in remorse. For he was a sensitive artist. John Lennon.

Finally, Yoko Ono grabbed Lennon and cooped him back up in the Dakota Apartment for the next four years. To mellow out. There he remained in seclusion and isolation, as if being quarantined from the rest of humanity, a virtual prisoner of his fame and his own destructive, malignant personality.###

-To be continued-

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What's this? Why, it's more of The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Shen Yun Performing Arts, War Memorial Opera House, 1/2 – 9. SF Sketchfest, multiple locations, 1/7 – 23. *The Band's Visit*, Golden Gate Theatre, 2/6. Wobbleland, Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, 1/14 – 16. At the Nob Hill Masonic Auditorium: The Gogo's, 12/28. Brian Regan, 12/31. Justin Lo, 1/8. Jack Harlow, 1/15. Marina, 2/2. Amine, 2/4. Read the Herald online at SanFranciscoHerald.Net.

It's a Wonderful Life, But Maybe Not Such a Wonderful Movie:

It's that time of the year again, when we gather 'round the television and watch Frank Capra's Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. To counter this traditional sentiment, here are some excerpts from "Why Henry Potter is the Undeniable Hero of 'It's a Wonderful Life'" by Daniel Savickas:

George's father, Peter Bailey was President of Bailey Brothers Building and Loan, and routinely butted heads with the film's supposed antagonist, Henry Potter. Potter owns the bank and most businesses in the fictional town of Bedford Falls. The elder Bailey rants to his son that Potter only wants to liquidate their business because it's one that he can't get his greedy hands on. George later parrots this same anti-capitalist rhetoric once he picks up his father's mantle.

Before elaborating on

Bailey's horribly flawed economic worldview, it is important to get some background on Potter, the man who should ultimately be considered the hero of Bedford Falls. We learn fairly early on in the film that Potter is a board member and stockholder in the Building and Loan. In all likelihood, the small Building and Loan is not a publicly traded company. Thus, it stands to reason that Potter was able to become a stockholder by giving Peter Bailey capital. If Potter truly wanted the Building and Loan to go under, he could have withheld his significant wealth from it. Instead, he invested, and later pushed for its liquidation because it was not making healthy business decisions or making a profit. This is counter to the Baileys' narrative that he is a monopolistic pig who treats little people like cattle.



For viewers who may not have picked up on this subtext earlier in the film, it is revealed far more clearly later on when the Great Depression hits Bedford Falls. Bailey's company is exposed as a fraud for its subprime loan schemes as, when there is a run on the Building and Loan, Bailey is unable to pay out. Potter, on the other hand, is financially secure enough and offers to buy out all of Bailey's customers. After making this honorable

offer, Bailey continues to degrade Potter, and convinces people that they don't need their money and that it should instead stay tied up in his company. The Building and Loan can only run if Bailey can convince people to act counter to their self-interest.

Even after the misinformation campaign against him, Potter offers Bailey economic security when he comes to him for help after his uncle misplaced significant funds from the Building and Loan. Admittedly, the funds were mistakenly given to Potter himself, but given his contributions over the years and the Baileys' poor business decisions, it was likely money Potter was owed anyway. But, Potter offers George a job, opportunity to travel, and prosperity for his family. Bailey considers it before declining and, again, smearing Potter as a greedy old man.###

MY FAVORITE HOLIDAYS FROM BEST TO WORST

By Ace Backwards

- 1.) Halloween (one of the rare holidays with a much-needed touch of evil).
- 2.) Fourth of July (you get to blow up stuff and shit).
- 3.) New Year's Eve (a grand celebration of alcoholism).
- 4.) Thanksgiving (I'm always down for stuffing my guts with meat and gravy and pumpkin pie).
- 5.) Ace Backwards Appreciation Day (not nearly celebrated enough as it should be).
- 6.) April Fool's Day (everybody plays the fool, no exception to the rule).
- 7.) Easter (you get to hunt for eggs and candy, which off-sets the depressing religious aspect of Jesus being crucified for our sins and all that).
- 8.) Valentine's Day (I'm a loser).
- 9.) Mother's Day (I got issues).
- 10.) Christmas (you get presents and there's jolly old Santa Claus, but it's so over-blown for an entire month that when Christmas finally comes around it's invariably a let-down).###

Large 16" Pizza with 2 toppings & 3 cans of soda or 3 bottles of water (16.9 oz.) \$27.99 (with this flyer). **Fresco Pizza Shawarma**, 1338 Polk. (415) 440-4410.

Sumac Istanbul Street Food, 1096 Union (at Leavenworth), www.sumacsf.com, (415) 307-6141. Istanbul's favorite street

flavors with the added twist of California's healthy food culture. Delivery or take-out.

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.

Lunch Specials, Happy Hours, Tecate Tuesdays. See chismesf.com for details. **Chisme Cantina**, 882 Sutter Street. (415) 370-7070.

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