

The Society Page By Gene Mahoney

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

At the Warfield: Peter Hook & The Light, 9/21. Snow Tha Product, 9/22. Johnny Marr & James, 9/23. Fontaines D.C. with Been Stellar, 9/24. Sepultra with Obituary, Agnostic Front, Claustrofobia, 9/25.

The work of Winston Smith, who designed album art for the Dead Kennedys, is hanging at Out of Sight Records in North Beach (50-A Bannam Place).

Stressed out? Don't start hitting the sauce too much. And don't go to Sixth and Mission and score some fentanyl. Here's an idea. In 1990 I bought a cassette tape in a bookstore. One side had a hypnotist talking. The other side had relaxing music with "subliminal messages." It was called "Relieve Stress and Anxiety" and really helped. It was kind of a new age thing, but it helped. And I was more prone to believe that stuff back then. There are no bookstores anymore, so I went to the website for Potentials Unlimited, which is the company that makes the tapes. *Made* the tapes. Now you have to get a CD or an MP3. Got the CD. It helps. I've been sleeping better. It's kind of weird listening to it, though, as the hypnotist on the tape became an avid proponent of not paying taxes and ended up going to prison for not paying his. He died in 2018 at age 79. Anyway, it's still relaxing. Check out potentialsunlimited.com.

Did you contact Muni like I told you to do last issue and told them to quit letting fare evaders on the bus? It's not fair we pay and these bums don't. Ending fare evasion will vastly improve this town. Do you think these bums and drug addicts around here pay their fares when they use Muni? No! Muni has become a free shuttle for scumbags. A letter sent to Muni (at 1 S. Van Ness Avenue, SF, CA 94109) is probably worth 200 emails.

Words from our Sponsors

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.

Gastrobot eats, 1096 Union (at Leavenworth), www.gastrobot eats.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

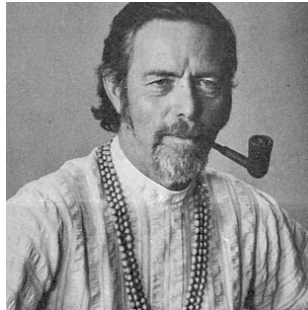


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Alan Watts was a peculiar person

By Ace Backwords



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One of the weird things about Alan Watts — “the Zen philosopher,” “the Haight-Ashbury guru” . . . When he died, his body was discovered at 6AM. And by 8:30AM he had already been cremated. His “friends” (though nobody’s sure who actually did it) apparently took his body down to the beach and immediately fired him up. Well before any autopsy or medical reports could be done. Which sparked all sorts of conspiracy theories. I mean, what was the big rush? Was there something about his death that they were eager to hide?

He was only 58 when he died. Relatively young. And it was said that his premature death was the result of his alcoholism. He was pounding multiple fifths of vodka and gin every day for many years. And Gary Snyder mentioned that when he would visit Watts he would see all the empty bottles stacked up under his kitchen sink. And I suppose part of the mystery surrounding his death was an attempt to cover up that aspect of his life. I guess because in his writings and lectures on spiritual matters he always sort of portrayed himself as this spiritual know-it-all who had discovered the secret of how to live a better life — that was a big part of his

appeal. And I guess burning out from the booze at age 58 didn't exactly enhance his legacy. While others speculated he might have committed suicide. Or was doing something strange at the time of his death.

I was deeply into Alan Watts when I was a younger man. A lost and confused younger man. And I read all of Alan Watts's books. And listened to all of his lectures. I guess in the hopes that I could attain the high level of consciousness that he had apparently attained. So years later, it was a little disappointing to find out that Alan Watts's main recipe for altering his own consciousness was booze. Straight from the bottle. Of course, he never once mentioned that in any of his books, that's for sure. And even in his autobiography, the only mention of his drinking is sort of a brief and romanticized account of sipping fine red wine with his lover while they gazed at the fire in the fireplace.###

Herald Archives: The 2000s

FAST FOOD REVIEWS

A Man of Size Weighs In

By Jeff Kay

Burger King -- In truth I don't really mind their food that much, but their restaurants have a seedy feel about them. I steer clear because I feel like it's only a matter of time before I find a big clump of dick hair in my Whopper, or get stabbed in the back during a drug deal gone bad in the next booth. (Ever notice that whenever one of those stories pop up in the news about employees spitting in food, it's usually at a Burger King?) If they were brighter, and didn't rely on various hues of brown as their color scheme, and if the employees and clientele didn't look like they need to kill something, I'd probably stop in every once in a while. At this point it's only a last resort. Nasty. C

McDonald's -- Conversely, their food is not fit for pigs, but their dining rooms are usually clean, and their employees don't look like they're wearing a house arrest ankle bracelet under their petroleum-based uniforms. Consequently, I find myself eating there more often than I should. (I always leave muttering, “Never again...”) All the kids running around make it seem a little more wholesome than it really is, I suspect, and it is a pretty good place to expel urine during a long car trip -- I wonder if they've ever done any studies to find out how much of their sales are piss-driven? One step up from a last resort, but still McNasty. The “plus” is for their awesome fries... and their janitorial staff. C+

Wendy's -- Easily the best of the Big Three. Their burgers are fresh and made on the spot, and feature actual produce if you so desire. Also, they have kick-ass chili, taco salads, various garden salads, and interesting chicken sandwiches. Through my job I've had the

opportunity to eat many a fancy-pants meal in stuffy restaurants, and expensive catered dinners at meetings and such. Very few could compare with the Wendy's #1 combo with cheese, no pickles, and a Coke. Call me low-class if you'd like, but that's a goddamn fact. A

Arby's -- I have a fast-food theory that no meals should ever cost more than a five-dollar bill. Yes, that's right, I have fast-food theories, what of it? I think it's a reasonable expectation, and Arby's breaks it. The food is pretty good, but it's too expensive. Whenever I see their sign my brain cancels it out, and it goes directly to the kill file. Years ago we used to get their five-for-five deal and that was pretty good, but I think they've discontinued it. Plus, have you ever seen that big shiny-ass beef ball they're constantly shaving in the back? Horrifying. B

Hardee's -- I haven't been to any of these joints in years, partly because I haven't seen one since I left Atlanta in '96. My general impression though, based on past experience, is that it's the worst place on Earth. Granted, my memory may be a little foggy, but that's what I remember. Frightening, sassy cashiers with an affinity for shiny gold teeth caps, parking lots with weeds growing up through the cracks, dirty tables and sticky floors, cardboard taped to the windows to cover up the bullet holes... it's a dream come true. And I also remember that they were constantly in search of an identity. One year they'd be a roast beef restaurant, the next they'd be selling fried chicken. I mean, what the hell?! I think they're somehow affiliated with Carl's Jr. now. Who knows, and who cares? As close as most of us will ever get to eating out of a dumpster. D

Taco Bell -- Good for a quick lunch, or after a night of bar-hopping, but it doesn't really cut it as a dinner spot. More a snack than a meal, really. The food is OK, except they like to load things down with those grotesque refried beans, that are nothing more than diarrhea fuel. Apparently that gray sludge is really cheap to produce, so they try to sneak it into everything they serve. I think I was once served a hunk of it over the lip of my iced tea, but I could be mistaken. When I bite into a vein of that crap, my gag reflexes kick in and my lower jaw retracts in an involuntary effort to stop my stomach from overflowing into my lap. But, to be fair, they have some good stuff -- especially when a manager is working the production line. A conscientiously prepared Burrito Supreme is one of the world's most perfect foods. B+

Chick-fil-A -- Also guilty of breaking the five dollar rule, but their restaurants are so rare, outside the South, you can't help but get a little excited when you happen upon one. Hands-down the best chicken sandwiches in all of fast food-dom. Mmmm... I wish I had one right now. Pretty much everything they

serve, including their just-squeezed lemonade, is really fresh and good. It ain't cheap though. I complained to a manager in Atlanta about it once and he looked at me like I was wearing a hat of turds. I don't think he fully grasped the thrust of my argument; he seemed to say to me, with his eyes, "Dude, this is a Chick-fil-A. What are you getting so worked up about?" Whatever. Their food is good and apparently they breed their own race of workers, because they're all incredibly well-mannered, clean-cut, and look exactly alike. I like that. A-

Carl's Jr. -- A west coast chain that's a lot like Burger King, without the nastiness. Their burgers are grilled, and really good, but for some reason I was never able to eat there very often. I'd stop in on a whim and leave thinking I'd just had the best meal of my life, and the next time I could barely choke it down. I don't think it was an inconsistency in their food, I just think there's something about it that doesn't lend itself well to the fast-food long-haul. I haven't really figured it out yet, but rest assured you'll be the first to know when I do. A big thumbs up for their advertising campaign which consists mostly of big black letters that spell, simply, "EAT MEAT." I applaud their attitude. B

KFC -- If there's anything more disgusting than biting into a piece of "fried" chicken and having half a quart of hot water (or something) roll down your chin, I don't know what it is. KFC is fuckin' grotesque. Hard, deep-fried grease shells, "water," snapping veins, people sucking marrow out of shiny bones, great sheets of animal skin hanging from the corner of glistening mouths... it's like something out of a Dean Koontz novel. This is a place for people not fully evolved to exercise their basic animal instincts, and indulge in a bloody feeding frenzy. It gives me the creeps just thinking about it. Oh sure, I'm a proud carnivore and everything, but I'm not a fucking dingo! I just experienced a full-body shiver. Shit! D

Long John Silver's -- Another place that likes to conceal everything on their menu in a hard grease shell, but they're somehow able to pull it off. Despite the fact that every meal there will remove twelve hours from the back-end of your life, it's worth it. I like the way you can jump back and forth between the hot fish (or chicken) and the cold cole slaw. Hot, cold, hot, cold. Very satisfying, indeed. Plus, all the grease will keep you regular and make your coat shiny. The one near my house is a LJS/A&W hybrid, so you can wash everything down with a big frosty mug of self-serve root beer! Their fries are limp though, and those "crispiers" are a little unsettling -- especially when I see people ordering extras. But overall, a good place to block your colon. B+

Krystal -- A Southern version of White Castle. I only ate there a couple of times, and

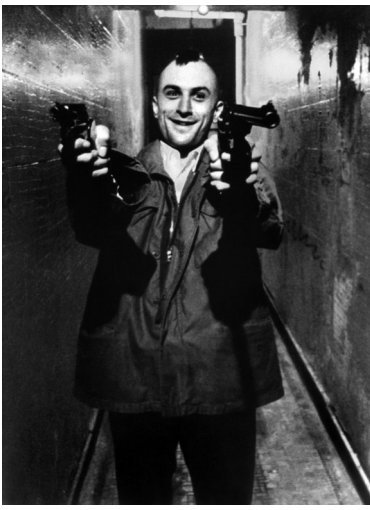
I didn't like it. They sell those little square hamburgers that they cook right by the cash register, with the bun and everything on the grill, and loaded down with a ton of onions. People buy the things by the sack-full, but I could never build up much enthusiasm for them. For one thing I'm not completely sure the meat they use is beef. It's a little gray. I heard rumors of it being ground-up goose livers, but you hear a lot of bullshit down south. I think the main reason why I didn't like it is because you'd practically have to throw your clothes away after a brief visit to one of their restaurants. I can't go for that (no can do). You'd walk out smelling like grease, onions, and mustard, and that's simply unacceptable. When you find yourself seriously considering taking a bath in tomato juice after a meal, to get the funk out of your skin, there's a big problem. C-

Jack In The Box -- I never set foot in one of these places, because I remember the news reports about people dropping dead all up and down the West Coast after eating there. I like fast food, but I'm not prepared to die for it. I like their spokesman, Jack, though. He's pretty cool. He puts a comical face on food-borne illness. Unrated

In 'N' Out -- A legendary Southern California institution, they have a menu with something like four items on it. They sell a burger called a Double Double that has roughly 700 fat grams. Predictably, it's their most popular item. Their burgers are pretty awesome, and come wrapped in old-fashioned wax paper. Their fries though, leave a lot to be desired. My friend Bill said they taste like chalk sticks, and that pretty much sums it up. They cut up potatoes right before your eyes and cook them in some kind of pussified California health oil (I'm not sure why they bother, considering those heart-halting Double Doubles they push), and have no taste whatsoever. Also, the places are always packed and you sometimes have to wait fifteen or twenty minutes for your food. But the workers all look like extras from *Beverly Hills 90210*, so it's not so bad. I guess they know that if you're gonna have to stand around waiting, you're not going to want to look at any ugly fuckers. You've got to admire their wisdom. B+

Visit Jeff Kay's *The West Virginia Surf Report* at thewvsr.com.





From "Taxi Driver" ©1976 Columbia Pictures

Herald Archives: The 2000s

The Ear (and Those Eyes)

By Lee Vilensky

Cab drivers are liars. Having been one for over 13 years, I feel I can make this statement without malice, toward my associates, and with a certain degree of self-deprecation. I'm not judging, simply reporting, and as a social scientist, I have to explore two hypotheses:

A.) The taxi industry attracts inveterate fibbers.

B.) Driving a cab will make an honest person into a habitual bullshitter.

My only conclusion is that this "liar phenomenon" is a combination of the two. If one don't get you, the other one will. You have to understand that to choose cab driving as a career, some very basic things have to have gone wrong in your life, like being forced out of your country into the U.S., and taking the only work available; being disabled mentally, physically, emotionally, psychically, sexually, politically, or morally; or lacking the ability to hack the straight, corporate, 9 to 5. Many drivers have impressive criminal records, and couldn't get a job wearing a paper hat, but cab driving was waiting for them. And it's always a temporary job, until our other "things" take off, which rarely happens. We're stuck in the taxi trap; quick easy cash, flexible schedule, no boss, unlimited coffee breaks, zero upward mobility. It's a subordinate "service" role, especially in a cosmopolitan city like the "Willie Brown" version of S.F. A 22 year old Stanford grad, will move to the city and immediately make 2.5 times what the average cabbie makes, plus Med., Dent., 401K, pats on the back, bonuses, paid vacations, and little or no fear of high school reunions. So we make shit up to pad the numbers, and alleviate the embarrassment.

Most of the lying takes place amongst ourselves. Pathetic one-upmanship. A ten dollar tip magically turns into a \$70 tip. A ride to Novato becomes a round-trip to Yosemite. A smile from a female customer upon exiting the cab escalates into a night of passionate love making in her suite at the Ritz. And yet, every cabbie has their one story that's amazing, ridiculous, ludicrous, impossible, unbelievable, and completely true. If you drive around the city long enough, especially at night, you're going to be exposed to, and involved in, some unusual activities, initiated by people who live in the shadows. You can't see them, until it's too late, and then you'll have a story to tell that will stop a card game in the SFO taxi lot.

Here's one of mine:

I picked up a young man at 12th & Folsom, and took him straight up Folsom, to Bernal Heights. I dropped him midway up the hill, near Precita Park. It was about 10pm. On the way down the hill, I saw a large man lying in the street near the curb. I passed him and said to myself, "Not my problem."

I went another block, towards Army, and stopped, thinking how still the man was. I backed up, stopped in the middle of the street directly parallel with the man, and hopped out of the cab to see if he was breathing. As I approached the body, a dark green Olds sedan, say about '72, came around the corner, ran right on top of him, and stopped. I yelled at the driver, "I think there's someone under your car."

I'd assumed he hadn't seen the man lying there. The driver, a Latino man with dark eyes, gave me a blank look and didn't seem to comprehend what I was telling him. Again I said, "You just ran over a man in the street, and he's under your car."

This time the driver gave me a look of pure evil, put the car in gear, and slowly drove off down the hill, dragging the man with him. The body dislodged from underneath the car, about 40 yards down and I ran towards him to see what was left, wishing I'd never stopped, never gotten out of my cab, never gotten involved. I opened his jacket and saw that he was breathing very hard. His head was a featureless mass of blood, which was trickling down the hill in a small, but steady stream. A Blood River. I ran back to the cab, radioed the dispatcher for an ambulance, then started yelling in the middle of the street for help. Within minutes there was a crowd of maybe 20 people hovering around the man, including an RN and a woman I had slept with, once, 4 years prior.

Nothing like a river of blood to liven up the evening.

15 minutes later the paramedics arrived. They started taking off the man's shirt, and he became conscious, howling like some kind of blown-up guy in a bad Hollywood movie about Vietnam (maybe Oliver Stone isn't full of shit after all.) The cops arrived and tried to talk to the guy, but he was incoherent, and busy dying, so they took my statement instead. I told them what I saw, and gave a pretty good description of the car, although I didn't get the plate number. Then one of the cops asked me to show him the exact spot where I first saw the man, before the car dragged him down to his present location. As we walked towards the spot, he explained that one of the man's ears had been ripped off his head. We reached, what I determined to be, the area where I first noticed the man, looked down, and saw a greyish lump lying there. The cop knelt down, looked at it closely, pulled out a large piece of white chalk (the same chalk my daughter uses to draw a hopscotch board in the street) circled the lump, and says to me, "Watch that ear."

Well, I didn't exactly watch it, but I did stand guard over it, until the cop came back with a little plastic baggie (the same kind my daughter brings her peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to school in.) He picked up the ear, which now looked like form-free gristle, put it in the bag with forceps, and ziplocked in freshness. At this point, I was given a case number, a telephone number, and was free to go. I turned in my cab and went home to drink, and take a 10mg. Valium I'd been saving for a special occasion.

The next day the SFPD called me asking for more info on the car and driver. I repeated what I had told the police the night before, and asked if the victim was alive. The cop told me he was doing fairly well despite having most of his ribs broken and an ear missing. Apparently he'd been badly beaten and left in the street, over some kind of gang-related drug deal gone sour. What I had witnessed was the finishing touches of that ordeal. The victim gave the cops this information but refused to reveal his attackers. I guess he was afraid of retaliation. Probably thought they'd come after his other ear. It's amazing how firmly people will cling to a criminal code of conduct, although thinking back to the driver's eyes, I had no doubt his vengeance knew no limits. The cop also mentioned, in parting, that I was lucky the driver didn't kill me for being a witness. This little tidbit bothered me for a long time, and for months afterward, I carefully looked at any car driving by me, searching for those two black holes for eyes. I don't think that guy ever got his ear back on his head, at least not the one he was born with. Maybe they grafted one on him from some meat borrowed from his ass, or inner thigh. I'll probably never know. The whole thing's a little hazy at this point, except for those eyes, devoid of windows, not a soul in sight.###

