“The Future Lies Ahead.”

As the year turns the temptation to consider this topic, time-honored at hundreds of thousands of high school graduations, becomes irresistible. And the break in routine provided by the winter holidays made it possible to read other writers’ speculations on the topic, particularly what’s being opined about the future of what is loosely called journalism.

This week we’ve finally gotten around to reading the December 16 issue of the London Review of Books, which always comes a week late in the mail, but has been languishing in our in-basket for a few more weeks under the catalogues and Christmas cards. Despite its name, the LRB is not so much book reviews, à la the increasingly truncated and boring snippets in the New York Times, but long well-written essays on interesting topics, sometimes though not always motivated by books.

In this issue, John Lanchester, an LRB editor, vamps on two pieces he’s read recently about the future of newspapers. The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) provided him with a long, statistics-packed and depressing treatise on The Evolution of News and the Internet, glibly summarized by Lanchester as “red ink all the way.” Bad news all around, Europe, U.S. and everywhere, and getting worse.

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He also draws on an analysis Alan Rusbridger contributed to the online Guardian of the geography of the media landscape as divided into three parts: “1. The press. 2. The big public broadcasters. 3. The new media, which are lively, chaotic, decentralised, prone to fads and crazes, and are opening up access to public spaces in all sorts of new ways.” Lanchester proposes to address only the first category, which for him seems to mean newspapers, whether distributed in print or online.

His solution? “…what the print media need, more than anything else, is a new payment mechanism for online reading, which lets you read anything you like, wherever it is published, and then charges you on an aggregated basis, either monthly or yearly or whatever.” Temptingly simple, isn’t it? I-tunes is cited as a model. Well, maybe.

This algorithm is predicated on somewhat loosey-goosey figures, not from OECD, which purport to show that more than half the cost of print papers is creating and distributing hard copy: “The production and distribution of newspapers is fantastically, outlandishly expensive.” Minus that, we are advised, it should be clear sailing for “newspapers” or “the press” (and here we do get into definition creep, because they’re no longer identical.)

Lanchester notes approvingly that Rupert Murdoch (with obligatory disclaimer: “I think Murdoch has been a strongly negative force in British life and I don’t wish his enterprises well...”) seems to be planning a publication called simply The Daily which will be distributed via I-Pad in partnership with Apple for 99 cents a week.

(One questionable detail: “There’s a rumour that they wanted to call it the Daily Planet, the paper that Superman worked for, but DC Comics said no.” My own knowledge of intellectual property law, on a topic which I investigated carefully some years ago, suggests that this ‘rumour’ isn’t accurate. Murdoch might need to talk to us about the name, as well as to the Twin Cities Daily Planet, a well-established online paper, however. We haven’t heard from him yet.)

Overall, it’s a good piece, well worth reading free online, but as someone who’s devoted too much of her life to laboring in trenches entrepreneurial and journalistic, I fear it glosses over some key questions.

First and foremost, what is news?
The recent WikiLeaks explosion adds spice to this perennial discussion. At press time, probably early December, John Lanchester was sure that what Julian Assange was handing out wasn’t the real stuff:

“…the WikiLeaks episode(s) shows both what the digital media can and can’t do. Its release of information is unprecedented: but it is not journalism. The data need to be interpreted, studied, made into a story. For that we need number 1, the press.”

Well, what if the press can’t get ‘the news’, but amateurs like Julian Assange can? Should he be prosecuted for treason for spreading it around in his unprofessional way, while the ‘journalists’ at the Guardian and the New York Times go free?

In any case, news, real news, is difficult and expensive to gather, whether you plan to distribute it on paper, over the airwaves, or via new media in its infinite variety. There’s less news in newspapers all the time. Lanchester again: “…eventually newspapers will either die or (more likely) be so hollowed out by cost-cutting that they exist as freesheets with a thin, non-functioning veneer of pretend journalism.”

At the Berkeley Daily Planet for financial reasons we’re currently engaged in trying to collect and disseminate a minimal amount of significant local news with mostly volunteer reporters, and, folks, it ain’t easy. Our readers also have at least four other purported sources of news about Berkeley which they can access via various media, sources with which there’s less news in newspapers all the time. Lanchester again: “…eventually newspapers will either die or (more likely) be so hollowed out by cost-cutting that they exist as freesheets with a thin, non-functioning veneer of pretend journalism.”

The lab has issued a call for proposals which seems to dominate many of these in social networking: exchanging ideas in the ether with people somewhat like themselves whose views interest them. Our genteel “letters to the editor” format produces mostly well-though-out short opinions, and our long reader commentaries are usually informative. We’ve been considering adding direct comment forms to each article, but we’re put off by the rude mouthing-off which seems to dominate many of these in other publications. (We’re tired of “robot” letters, computer-generated on assigned topics, so we usually skip them.)

Our speculations have reached the eye-bleeding length at this point with no obvious conclusions, so here’s where it’s time, once again, to ask you, our readers, what you think about these topics. If you read the LRB piece you’ll be an instant expert. This is just the Cliff Notes version—many more piquant propositions are offered in the 5,000 words original with its two footnoted and linked source articles. And if and when you make up your mind about what The Future holds for journalism, share your findings with us.

News

Lawrence Berkeley Lab’s RFQ Points toward Richmond Site Choice

By Richard Brenneman
Tue Jan 04 17:36:00 -0800 2011

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory [LBNL] plans a massive new second campus — including 2 million square feet of buildings up to 3,000 feet long — and they’re looking for a place to put it.

The main LBNL campus, the first of UC Berkeley’s Department of Energy [DOE] laboratories, will remain at its current site in the Berkeley Hills above Strawberry Canyon, while the new campus will consolidate existing labs scattered around the East Bay into a single new site.

Lab officials will pick the final site in June, with construction of the first phase currently set to begin in July 2013, with scientists taken possession of the new facilities in December 2015.

A phone-in press conference with LBNL representatives Tuesday morning offered few new details.

The lab has issued a call for proposals from communities and developers interested in the project, but the Request for Qualifications [RFQ] makes clear that the university’s Richmond Field Station [RFS], acquired
in 1950, would be the default site unless would-be developers can come up with something better.

The RFQ is available online here: http://www.lbl.gov/Community/second-campus/

The lab’s specifications for the project closely match those of the earlier proposal for the Field Station floated six years ago for a project of identical size dubbed the Bayside Research Campus. UCB picked Bay Area developer Simeon Properties to spearhead the project.

The 9 April 2004 proposal for that project may be found here: www.cp.berkeley.edu/RFQ_BaysideResearch.pdf

Simeon owns property adjacent to the RFS, dubbed Campus Bay, where plans to build a high rise condo complex were torpedoed after community activists forced a massive toxic waste cleanup on the site.

Both RFS and Campus Bay were the sites of major chemical manufacturing facilities which left the soils heavily contaminated with a noxious brew of hazardous chemical waste.

Lab representatives said Tuesday morning that they were unaware of the earlier plans for the Field Station.

The new LBNL campus would consolidate a range of programs currently located outside the main campus, including the Joint BioEnergy Institute [JBEI], a Department of Energy lab working on development of fuels from plant crops.

Research at the new facility would focus heavily on creating genetically modified organisms, with the labs to be brought onto the new campus focusing in three related areas, according to the RFQ: “Genomics, Life Sciences, and Physical Biosciences.”

In addition to the Emeryville-based JBEI, other projects to be relocated on the new site include the Joint Genome Institute, currently located in Walnut Creek, the National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center in downtown Oakland and “much of the Life Sciences Division in West Berkeley.”

The biggest loser in the relocation would be Wareham Properties, which owns the buildings housing JBEI and the Berkeley Life Sciences labs.

First on lab’s list of site attributes is this:

“The site should allow for the development of a state-of-the-art facility with a beautiful environment that will be the location of choice for internationally recognized researchers. It should allow for sustainable land use and circulation patterns, maximizing density to reduce overall building footprints and conserve open space. The site should allow for the placement and massing of buildings to maximize shared views.”

The Richmond Field Station, located on the shore of San Francisco Bay, certainly meets the beauty criterion, as well as the specification that the new site be within a 25-minute drive of the main campus. But the RFS falls short on some other attributes, especially the one specifying that it “should be proximate to existing or planned restaurants and cafes which offer a range in price and food types, preferably within walking distance.”

Nonetheless, the RFQ notes that the RFS “by and large meets the parameters of the Site attributes. Respondents to this RFQ should know that the University may choose to site the second campus at RFS and will be evaluating potential sites relative to their ability to better meet the needs of the University and the DOE.”

As for that 3,000-foot-long building specified in the RFQ, lab officials weren’t able to identify a specific use for a structure more than a half-mile in length: “We have nothing specific planned...it’s based on some concepts of projects we foresee but might not even execute.”

But if the Field Station doesn’t work out, there’s a second site in Richmond that might work even better: A majority of Richmond voters last year passed a non-binding resolution opposing the $1.5 billion casino complex planned by Berkeley developer James Levine for Point Molate.

With the casino industry hit hard by the economic crash, a university lab might be just the ticket for the Point.

According to the RFQ, LBNL currently employs 4,200, including 11 Nobel Laureates. The lab’s budget for fiscal 2010 was $700 million, and the RFQ estimates related regional economic activity generated by the lab at nearly $700 million annually.

Developers interested in the project have until 4 March to submit their responses, with the winner to be picked in June.

Here’s the overview from the university’s 2004 proposal for the Richmond Field Station:

The University of California, Berkeley, has designated a 152-acre property currently known as “The Richmond Field Station”, and located on I-580 adjoining the Regatta Boulevard interchange/off-ramp as a “Bayside Research Campus” (BRC). It is the University’s intent to encourage and enhance selected existing scientific research activities located on the property, maintain the environmental integrity of native grasslands and wetlands, and simultaneously encourage the development of approximately 70 acres of the property into a low-density, multi-building site scientific research campus. The objectives of the BRC are to provide significant benefit to the University by augmenting and enhancing the instructional and research base of the Berkeley Campus by:

☐ Creating a new world-class research campus with state of the art facilities and amenities to enhance UC Berkeley’s ability to continue to attract and retain top quality researchers and scientists.

☐ Creating an intellectual resource through the opportunity for interaction among outstanding private sector and University academic research activities.

☐ Creating an environment that supports private enterprise collaboration with University-led research activities, and through working in partnership with the community to establish a unique market identity for the BRC.

☐ Creating a financial resource.

Readers’ contributions to the Fund for Local Reporting supported reporting for this article.

UC Police Report Telegraph Assault Last Thursday

From UC Police Department
Tue Jan 04 16:17:00 -0800 2011

On Thursday, December 30, 2010 at approximately 1:15 a.m. two male victims and a few friends, affiliation unknown, were walking on Telegraph from Larry Blakes. At the intersection of Durant and Telegraph one of the victims was approached by an unknown male who stabbed him in the head. One of victim’s male companions intervened and was stabbed in the lower back by the suspect. The suspect and two companions fled the scene on foot. BPD responded to the scene and searched the area for the suspect and his companions but were unable to locate them. BFD treated the victims at the scene for non-life threatening injuries and
transported them to a local trauma center.

The suspect was described as:

An Asian or Filipino male in his 20s, 5’7” in height, 180 lbs., with a heavy build, a bald head, brown eyes, wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, a white t-shirt, and dark pants. He was in the company of possibly two other Asian or Filipino males in their 20s, all wearing black clothing. If you have any information about this crime, please contact:

Berkeley Police Department (510) 981-5900 / 24 Hours

**UC Faculty Outraged by “The Gilded 36”, Worried About Repercussions**

*From the Berkeley Faculty Association*  
**Tue Jan 04 16:25:00 -0800 2011**

Nearly 1000 UC faculty and staff have signed a petition to UC President Mark Yudof condemning the demands of the 36 UC executives threatening to sue UC over the pension cap on salaries above $245K. The number of signatories is remarkable given that the petition has been circulating for less than two days and campuses are only slowly reopening after winter break. Approximately 80% of the signatories are faculty.

The petition reads in part:

“At a time when the UC pension system is endangered and the entire instructional and research enterprise of UC is imperiled we find it outrageous that these managers -- whose very job it is to steward the system -- would demand exorbitant pension compensation. They cannot have it both ways: private sector salary levels and public employee pensions.

The damage to the image of the university from excessive executive pay and benefits, and now from this threat of a law-suit....has been immense. Most of us work for reasonable salaries but also for the public good. If the elite earners do not care enough about the public university to stay, then let them depart for the private sector. We believe you can find dedicated people within and without UC who would be willing and able to replace these individuals.”

Signatory comments, many of which issue from distinguished faculty, range from “disgusting,” “immoral,” “shameful” and “fire them all” to “how about capping UC salaries at $245K?” and “this arrogant act of greed is symptomatic of the whole orientation of the current UC administration.” Many signers, both faculty and staff, emphasized in their comments the importance of working for UC as public servants rather than as a road to private wealth. None bought the argument that excessive compensation packages are essential to attracting the talent that makes UC great or makes it run well.

The Berkeley Faculty Association and SAVE the University, sponsors of the petition, are committed to maintaining the integrity of the UC pension system in combination with public sector salary scales.

**Oakland’s First Chinese-American Mayor Walks Through the City**

*David Bacon*  
**Tue Jan 04 16:12:00 -0800 2011**

Oakland Mayor Jean Quan walked through the city on her inauguration day. She is the first Chinese American woman elected mayor. She started at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center in Chinatown. She then stopped at the Asian Resource Gallery, which featured an exhibit of posters curated by Greg Morizumi, from the Third World Strike at the University of California and political movements in the Asian American community since the 1960s. Mayor Quan designed one of the posters in the exhibit, protesting the beating death of Vincent Chin.

During her walk, she visited Lincoln Elementary School, in the heart of Chinatown. Quan was previously a member of the Oakland School Board, and students excited by her visit made small speeches and sang for her. Kindergarten-age children looked on through the school windows.

Her walk took her down 17th Street, where storeowners have been hit hard by the economic recession. One storeowner hugged her, as the mayor urged Oakland residents to support local businesses by shopping in the city.

The last stop on Mayor Quan’s walk was the Leamington Hotel, where her father worked as a cook. There she was honored by the leaders of the Alameda County Central Labor Council, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and other local unions, along with the longshore union’s drill team. Mayor Quan’s husband, Floyd Huen, her son and daughter, and state Assembly member Sandre Swanson, one of her strongest supporters, all walked with her together with dozens of well-wishers.

**Caffe Med Licking Its Wounds After Spate of Recent Violence; “BabyCott” Sputters**

*By Ted Friedman*  
**Tue Jan 04 16:09:00 -0800 2011**

Twas the night before New Year’s Eve and the Caffe Mediterraneum on Telegraph Avenue was peacefully licking its wounds after a recent spate of violence and a boycott.

The new owner, Craig Becker, 59, was taking his first vacation since he took over the Med more than three years ago. He had left the cafe in the hands of a triumvirate of loyal employees—something that surprised regulars.

Becker has been a one man management team. He buys the food and supplies and delivers them to the Med himself and does many of the repairs inside and out. He also manages a large staff of mostly young baristas and cooks who seem pleased to be preserving a Berkeley institution— and unembarrassed by their loyalty to their boss.

Attendance was low. It often is on Thursday night. That’s why Becker started acoustic music nights, featuring local guitarists, pianists, and singers.

A teenager was singing “The Times, They Are A-Changing,” with a rousing guitar accompaniment Dylan might have liked. It reminded me that times have changed at the Med.

But then again they haven’t. My previous dispatch from the Med described an inscrutable boycott over free speech violations, classism, and insensitivity to homeless street people.

The boycott brought in an episode of violence: a robbery in which a barista was mugged; and an altercation in which an irate man tangled with Becker and wound up hog tied (see my Planet piece Dec. 21).

That previous article cited a 1986 boycott over smoking restrictions.

But there have been other Med boycotts—going back to ’69. The ’69 boycott (it lasted a day) was over banning street people from restrooms. This presages the recent babycott.

Before ’69 the Med was hosting Free Speech and Black Panther meetings.
Perhaps the mother of all boycotts rolled in during the early eighties. This one was complex, involving hard feelings toward the owners who were accused of elitism, in-fighting, and intolerance to drug dealing in the Med. One of the owners, a reserve police officer in a nearby town, posted the "No Soliciting; No Dealing" sign which now is hiding behind a community billboard. The community billboard was Becker’s idea.

That boycott emptied three tables. Some of the boycotters boasted they were brewing their own coffee at home. They never returned.

But Medheads who still indulge the habit (addiction?) are today more likely to be concerned over the wounded carrot juicer when it roars like a 747 at take-off—stopping conversations throughout the caffe—as they are about the latest boycott.

John Anderson, 88, busses in daily from Yountville, 50 miles away. He’s deaf and blind, but finds his way to the Med, unassisted. He was at the Med’s opening in ‘57.

Elder Medheads have been involved in many phases of the Med’s comeback after years of neglect under the previous owner. Becker refers to them affectionately, if sometimes warily, as “the peanut gallery.” Perhaps he’s wary because the gallery has grown surly. In fact, my previous Med article reeks of peanut gallery.

Recently, a Medhead for 50 years stalked out after delivering a diatribe punctuated by four F-U’s louder than the carrot juicer. He has not returned. Some Medheads (well, me) have asked him his secret for breaking the habit.

Another peanut gallery laureate went to the front of the caffe—now known as the “looney box”—an ersatz soap box, to deliver a spirited denunciation of a new piano Becker had installed.

The piano, a turn of the century gem goes well with Joplin. Becker had to take a seminar in its operation and maintenance.

But the peanut gallery denouncer was having none of it. He wanted the Med to nurture its conversational roots. The piano was drowning out talk, he claimed.

And so it goes. Point and counterpoint, the Med’s preferred dialectic.

Berkeleyans are loyal to, but attitudinal about, their coffee houses.

Ted Friedman has had a Med Jones for 35 years; he Medtweets about the Med at twitter.com/berkboy.

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**Reader Opinion**

**“Plant Blight” Update:**

**“Well...if you insist...meddling can be such fun!”**

*By Robert Brokl  
Mon Jan 03 17:07:00 -0800 2011*

A recent op ed in the Berkeley Daily Planet recounted how the verdant garden Alfred Crofts and I have tended for a decade at a nearby rental property aroused the ire of a neighbor who reported us for “blight,” resulting in steep fines. Since then, we’ve continued research—talking to other victims of the blight ordinance and pursuing an as yet-incomplete Public Records Act search of our file over Community and Economic Development (CEDA) stonewalling. We found a neighbor who had to spend $10,000 replacing shingles because some were “cracked.”

At the pocketbook level, we’re now out over $1300 in fines and a lien was placed on the property despite the payment. Our appeal dated Dec. 3, reviewed in-house by the CEDA Building Services Dept., was denied without comment or explanation Dec. 9. We were charged an additional $113 for their effort, and expect another charge for the “billing dispute” denial, both of which we were told to file to keep our appeal alive. The only options left to us now are small claims court or other legal action. And under the “two strikes” bite of the blight ordinance, we are vulnerable to the same fees for the next two years!

We believe the blight ordinance, enacted to the rid the City of seemingly intractable and serious blight, has morphed into a funding mechanism for City coffers, aiding and abetting neighbors’ feuds. This was confirmed by City Hall insiders with access to the raw data from the blight complaint files. We learned over half of the complaints are over untidiness and housekeeping issues, like trash. A small percentage involve unregistered secondary units or unpermitted building. (This lack of emphasis on structures may explain the continuing existence even in upscale environs of high-profile, truly blighted commercial and residential properties.) There is no threshold for separating trivial or spiteful complaints from serious ones, nor any tying of zip codes to complaints that might reveal where the City’s resources are spent fighting “blight”, whether in the hills or over plants blocking views or in the flats where presumably more blight exists. And, with the second strike, garbage cans left at the curb too long can break your bank account!

Do the math: 40 inspectors, 22,000 blight complaints per year, $1239 for the second strike—quite a revenue stream.

In our case, although neighbors over the years have complemented us on the garden and/or put in similar ones, one who didn’t managed to involve a sidewalk/right of way inspector, Fred Loeser, in Bldg. Services. He worked the system for the neighbor, although anonymous complaints get the same deference. When it turned out the cracked and lifted sidewalk was caused by City-owned street trees (and thus unfixable), the neighbor moved on to complaints about “how it was impossible for me to push my baby stroller down the sidewalk without my baby getting a bunch of leaves in her face” and the garden “continually growing and changing.”

The trigger for the City to act was apparently when he spotted someone defecating in our garden. Rather than tell the person to stop, he e-mailed Loeser. We think rosebushes are useful deterrents for such antisocial behavior, and plants and trees are good not only for global warming but for aesthetic reasons, too. But even gray cement can’t force a malefactor to do his business on a potty. And, mind you, although the relentless neighbor hounded staff, only once some years back did we or the tenants get a note from him. In that case, the plant he objected to was removed.

**Political pay back?**

The documents we have so far pried lose under the Public Records request reveal how political and high profile our case is. Inspector William Patchen wrote to his supervisor Nov. 18: “The owner has been raising Cain... (and) have taken their case up the chain and I would like to have answers before it blows up.” Ray Derania, Building Services administration and the court of last resort according to a Councilperson Brunner aide, wrote an e-mail to Walter Cohen, CEDA head, on Nov. 18: “For the new administration, would you consider turning over a new leaf and just letting us handle stuff? This is routine. If transgressors are turned back to us, it’s surprising how quickly they see-the-light and get with the program (even though it costs them some money sometimes.” Cohen—who you’d think was busy dreaming up stadiai and downtown big box shopping malls—wrote back: “Well...if you insist...meddling can be such fun! But OK.”

This is the same Ray Derania who we, along with a loose coalition of neighbors,
tangled with over the recent demolition of the Courthouse Athletic Club, along with removal of the mature redwoods. Even though it was clear to everyone the developer owner had no intentions of building the market rate condos originally proposed, the City cooperated with the owner to scrape the site to put the empty (therefore more valuable) lot on the market. Derania was called before the City Council to defend the denial of our tree removal appeal and the City Council voted to refund our appeal fees.

It doesn’t have to be this way: The outrageous fines, fees, and—if unpaid—liens on property shouldn’t be used to generate funds the way street sweeping violations do. (And the City of Albany doesn’t even charge for blocking street sweepers.) According to AuditOaklandCEDA.com, a site created by another blight victim, cities like Detroit have transparent appeal processes and work with citizens to fix blight, with the goal of keeping them in their houses and not forcing them out.

Mayor Quan’s slogan is “changing Oakland block by block.” To correct the blight ordinance, she need look no further than Richard Cowan, her Chief of Staff. For years, he headed Conciliation Forums, a group composed mostly of volunteers like our longtime neighbor Janet Keita, who mediated disputes between neighbors and groups. The idea was to bring about peaceful resolutions and compromises, not to exploit vendettas for City budgets. We need to get back to that model and maybe Cowan, in the “new administration,” wears another hat and “meddles” in a better way.

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Chase Bank Customer Complains of Mistreatment: Deposit Missed, Checks Bounced and Worse

By Judy Lackey
Tue Jan 04 16:36:00 -0800 2011

My husband and I (Berkeley residents) were recently treated terribly by Chase Bank, as I briefly describe below. I think that this story is of interest to many of your readers because Chase is a new bank in California. We, along with thousands of other Californians, had our Washington Mutual accounts become Chase accounts after the buy-out. I’ve heard many stories of people being mistreated by Chase, whereas Washington Mutual was known for their customer service -- my husband, a Seattle native, had his Washington Mutual account since he was a child.

My husband Ethan’s grandma wrote us each a check for $100 for Christmas. She is going blind and she could only find a red pen to write the checks. My husband went to deposit these checks at our local Chase branch ATM last Tuesday (12/28/10). Apparently the red ink did not show up well on the scan that the ATM took of the check, so Ethan had to manually enter the amount of the checks. We went out of town for New Years, returning on Sunday (1/2/11). On Monday, I went to pay our mortgage (held by a different bank) online and realized that neither of our paychecks were direct deposited in our account, so we didn’t have the funds to pay. I called Chase and was told that the direct deposits had been refused because our account was “restricted,” had been closed by Chase due to “fraud,” and there was absolutely nothing we could do about it. They said that they would send us the funds remaining in our account in 10 days. I then went to my local branch in downtown Oakland and spoke to the branch manager who was sympathetic, made some phone calls, but could do nothing about the situation since Chase had already decided to close the account. She confirmed that the “fraud” concerned the checks from Ethan’s grandma which they said were “blank”. Clearly no human every looked at the checks, as they were decidedly not blank. They made no effort to find out what had happened, instead just immediately closed our account.

The letter informing us that our account was closed arrived only today (Monday 1/3/11). Meanwhile, not knowing our account was closed, we sent a check for our car registration to the DMV last week and gave our day care a check today. Per Chase’s (unconscionable, I think) Account Agreement, they will not honor these checks, likely resulting in many fees, which they are not liable for according to this “agreement”. Not to mention, we have no bank account, do not have access to the funds from our paychecks, and cannot pay our mortgage or other bills. We might have fraud reported to credit agencies and our credit will likely suffer because we will inevitably be late on some payments since we have no funds or bank account. All because no one at Chase bothered to actually look at the checks from Ethan’s grandma, showing the ultimate disrespect to their customers and causing us completely unwarranted and unnecessary hardship.

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Grandma Bev Defies Union-Busting at Summit Hospital

By Paul Rockwell
Mon Jan 03 19:05:00 -0800 2011

I am sitting at a table in the Summit Hospital cafeteria in Oakland, California. Beverly Griffith, a spirited African-American grandparent who worked for 32 years in the Summit EVS (Housekeeping) department, taps my arm. “See that security guard at the table? He’s watching us. SEIU gets Security to follow me.”

I think to myself. How many grandmother are security risks? So I ask: “Why would anyone follow you?”

“It’s harassment,” she insists. “I’m involved in the NUHW campaign to decertify SEIU. The election between these two unions takes place January 19th. Both management and SEIU are working together to make employees who converse with me feel uncomfortable.”

“Well,” I say, “harassment is not uncommon in contentious union elections.” She thought I was dismissive.

“No. No. This isn’t just some local tiff. It’s not about me. It’s not about overzealous security guards. It’s about Employer union-busting. Summit is rigging the outcome of the election, trying to make sure SEIU defeats us January 19th.”

Don Roberts, a transporter who has worked at Summit for 24 years, corroborated Beverly’s complaint. “Every time you see Bev, there’s a security guard around her. The guards follow me and they watch me, too. Yesterday I was on the first floor. A guard watched me. Then I went up to the third floor. There he was again. Summit even puts up security video cameras in the areas where the pro-NUHW people congregate. We are under constant surveillance.”

Oscar Medina, an army vet and a single father, works as a transporter at Summit. “One guard told me straight out that Summit Security is instructed to watch Beverly and her friends. I have nothing against the guards. They do what they’re told, and they don’t even have a union.”

So what’s the evidence that union-busting (in the middle of a union election) is official Summit policy? “Oh yeah, baby, it’s a top-down thing.” Suddenly, Oscar pulled out a Summit management memo, (along with Summit e-mails to employees, containing vote influencing threats that an NUHW victory could mean loss of benefits.) I don’t know how the internal document became public. (Unless it was released by
Cops are obligated to respond to calls, even bomb the pro-union climate in the cafeteria.

No problem, no argument, no fight, not even quickly. She realized in seconds there was no union, no management, no SEIU, no NUHW reps allowed to conduct business as normal. NUHW--Beverly Griffith/ Joslyn and company are not allowed to conduct business on property, but we have not had very much luck with police support.” (I later learned why there is friction between the Oakland Police and Summit.)

The memo continues, “We must make contact with anyone from NUHW that appears to be conducting business in any of the medical center buildings. We must ask them to stop conducting business and leave.”

“If they refuse, contact appropriate police departments requesting that the person(s) be removed.”

“This is of a high level of importance and it looks like we will be dealing with this group for a while.”

Clearly, the experiences of Beverly, Don, Oscar (along with other employees who declined to publish their names) are not isolated incidents. The guards follow orders from the top. Summit has instituted a lockout of one union in order to facilitate the victory of the other.

Employers are required by law to remain neutral in union elections. They are also required to respect the right of all employees to carry out union activity in non-working areas on their own time. In practice, Summit instructions flout the laws that, as I understand them, protect the rights of labor.

Summit’s use of the Oakland Police at taxpayer expense to sway an election in favor of management and SEIU is particularly disturbing.

On December 29th, I returned to the cafeteria to conduct my final interviews about Summit interference in the decertification election. Employees were sitting at a table, talking quietly with Sal Rosselli, interim president of NUHW. He asked questions, and he answered questions. At a second table, members of SEIU and NUHW debated union issues quietly. It was comforting to see civil democracy in practice.

However, true to the instructions in the memo, management called the Oakland Police. All without cause. As four officers arrived, the affable Sergeant talked with the guards. Cops are trained to assess situations quickly. She realized in seconds there was no problem, no argument, no fight, not even a loud voice. Summit, it appeared, used the police, not to keep the peace, but to stink-bomb the pro-union climate in the cafeteria. Cops are obligated to respond to calls, even when employers cry wolf. But the Sergeant seemed irked by the misuse of her precious skills and time. The officers left quickly. Cops don’t like to be used. No doubt that is why the Summit memo states: “We have not had very much luck with police support.”

In a nutshell, the situation at Summit boils down to this: one union is excluded from the workplace, or is driven into corners and shadows through systematic intimidation. The very presence of police at union discussions is itself a deterrent. Summit’s favored union, SEIU, receives free access to the campus, in accordance with the instructions in the official memo.

Today the Summit facility is inundated with well-paid SEIU staff, some flown in from out of state at member expense. The paid lobbyists, outsiders, never worked at Summit.

In contrast to SEIU privileges, Beverly Griffith and Don Roberts, who gave decades of their lives to the Summit healthcare community, are met with armed police when they dare to distribute flyers, or carry on normal pro-union discussions. And now Oakland Police and taxpayers are sucked into the fray.

Clearly, the NLRB, which oversees elections, is losing control of due process at Summit, Oakland.

As I left the cafeteria, I looked back. The police were gone. Still, there were the two security guards, their arms folded high on their chests like caricatures from Orwell’s 1984, staring down at NUHW supporters. At the table, like a heroic civil rights activist at a lunch counter in 1960, was Grandma Bev, undaunted and composed in face of outrageous provocations from the union-busting Summit/SEIU alliance.

Letters to the Editor

The Oaks Theater is No More! Witch Hunt; Cursed Cell Phones! The Truth about the Tea Party Movement; The New Left; No Need to Close the Warm Pool in June; Clarification

The Oaks Theater is No More!
We went to Howl. Dark totally.
No marquee, zip nada.
Yesterday they offered HOWL for tonight, now nothing.
Phone disconnected.
Very very sad.
Laura X

Witch Hunt

Daniel Issa is about to head up a ‘Witch hunt’ against Obama.

Issa as the incoming Republican Chairman of the House Oversight Committee vows to get President Obama. He even calls Obama one of the most corrupt presidents. Already cocked and loaded with subpoena power and some 208 ‘hearings’ scheduled to investigate Stimulus Corruption, BP, Obama’s Czars, Issa, vows to get President Obama. He even calls Obama one of the most corrupt presidents, So, Issa will spend his time ignoring the crooks on Wall Street and the on going wars which have spent trillions.

Richard Nixon, as a member of the House Un-American Activities Committee, received national attention for his hostile questioning of Alger Hiss. In 1950 he was elected to the Senate following a bitter campaign in which he unfairly portrayed his opponent as a communist sympathizer; the epithet “Tricky Dick” dates from this period. They wouldn’t listen to us about Nixon and his perfidy, but now he is exposed and deposed!

Ted Rudow III, MA

Cursed Cell Phones!

In the Holy Spirit/Newman Hall Chapel on Dwight Way, serving the campus community, there’s large screen to the left of the altar. It bears the message, “God is present in this gathered assembly. He doesn’t need cell phones to reach you.” We’re then asked to turn off all cell phones and papers, whereupon there’s a flurry of activity with parishioners digging in vest pockets and handbags to turn off the offending item before Mass begins.

As a devout Catholic I’ve never for one moment doubted that God IS present at ALL times—not only in church but in such unlikely places as restaurants, theaters, and Trader Joe’s. It pains me to think that He must listen to pathetic pleas for health, prosperity and reduced mortgage payments millions of times a day! Indeed, it’s my fervent hope that our Heavenly Father will deactivate all cell phones, rendering them useless (except for emergencies) for the good of mankind. In my humble opinion this world would be a far better place were it not for that instrument of the Devil

Dorothy Snodgrass

The Truth about the Tea Party Movement

There’s something I’ve got to get off my
back before we have to go through another year of Tea Party hyperbole. Most people are still in the dark about the Tea Party movement.

The Tea Party came into existence after the election of our first president of color. Since then, there has been a constant attack of President Obama by these so-called patriots.

The Tea Party is 99% white. Hmmm. What does this tell you about this clan and is it representative of the American society?

The Tea Party is not your quintessential “mom and pops” grassroots movement unless you see “grassroots” to be the home of racism, religious bigotry and hatred.

Tea Party Republicans are middle-of-the-road racists and are a backlash of angry and frustrated people who see the American dream slipping through their fingers and have pegged President Obama as the perfect person to blame for their predicament.

The Tea Party is a composite of anti-abortion, anti-gay and anti-immigration remnants and its manifesto could be “Keep America white.”

The Tea Party is an anomaly on the American landscape, a paraphrase for all that is wrong in America, and a ghost from our racist past.

If only we could put this subject to rest and throw it out in the trash.

**Ron Lowe**

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**The New Left**

The polls, well, they don’t mean a thing. We have a new ref in the ring.

While nobody budes

The wills of the judges,

New centrist are seen as left wing.

**Ove Ofteness**

***

**No Need to Close the Warm Pool in June**

The June warm-pool closure that pool users have been warned about may be unnecessarily pessimistic as “phase II” work is slated to commence only after “phase I” work, the stadium, is complete; the latter is behind schedule and according to the director of facility planning at the school district phase II is most likely to be delayed for three months beyond June.

It would be premature for the city parks department to schedule a June shutdown of warm-pool programs; instead the city should plan to keep the warm-pool operational as long as possible with a very tentative September date or even later as a possibility.

A thousand people have used the warm-pool at BHS during the past 2 or 3 years and the pool has become a hugely important resource for the disabled. I urge all players to work for the continuity of the warm-pool and its current system of programs

* * *

**Clarification**

I noticed an inaccuracy in your December 1st column titled “Can KPFA Be Saved?” In the column you mention the Land Use Report, produced by KUSP volunteer Gary Patton. The issue with the Land Use Report was a failure to make clear to the audience professional relationships the producer had with subjects he was covering – a critical issue for the vast majority of people concerned with informing the public. Our station management and Mr. Patton worked out a new policy for disclosing these relationships. This improved the public service the Land Use Report provides and our working relationship with a valuable community volunteer.

**J.D. Hillard**

Talk and Information Producer
Central Coast Public Radio KUSP

**Columnists**

**The Public Eye: 2010 “Person” of the Year: The US Supreme Court**

By Bob Burnett
Mon Jan 03 17:14:00 -0800 2011

It’s difficult to look beyond the tumult of current events and ask, “what happened this year that will be remembered ten, twenty, or fifty years from now?” However, there was one 2010 event that, in terms of its long-term impact, loomed above the others, the Citizens United v. FEC Supreme Court Decision.

Writing in the NEW YORK REVIEW, law professor Ronald Dworkin explained Citizens United v. FEC: “In the 2008 presidential primary season a small corporation, Citizens United, financed to a minor extent by corporate contributions, tried to broadcast a derogatory movie about Hillary Clinton. The FEC declared the broadcast illegal under the BCRA [Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act]. Citizens United then asked the Supreme Court to declare it exempt from that statute on the ground, among others, that it proposed to broadcast its movie only on a pay-per-view channel.” In an extraordinary example of judicial activism, the Supreme Court conservative majority, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, declared the entire BCRA act unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court hadn’t been the story of the year since the December 12, 2000, *Bush v. Gore* decision. This paved the way for Bush’s installation as President and his nomination of John Roberts as Chief Justice in September of 2005. Many Supreme Court observers regard Roberts as the judicial equivalent of the “Manchurian Candidate.”

NEW YORKER legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin noted Roberts dogmatic conservatism: “In every major case since he became the nation’s seventeenth Chief Justice, Roberts [and his conservative allies] has sided with the prosecution over the defendant, the state over the condemned, the executive branch over the legislative, and the corporate defendant over the individual plaintiff.”

John Roberts had worked as an attorney for both the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations and, therefore, possible conservative “judicial activism” was a concern of the Democratic Senators that questioned him before confirmation. Roberts denied that he was an activist and appeared to honor the legal tradition of *stare decisis*, abiding by precedent. Five years later, it’s apparent that Roberts hid his true philosophy.

In the *Citizens United* decision Roberts aggressively advanced the conservative agenda along three fronts. First, the decision to hear this case was an extraordinary example of judicial activism. Professor Dworkin observed, *Citizens United* “did not challenge the constitutionality of [BCRA]. But the five conservative justices—Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Samuel Alito, Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas—decided on their own initiative, after a rehearing they themselves called for, that they wanted to declare the act unconstitutional anyway.” [Emphasis added] Justice Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion, explained that the conservative justices called for the rehearing because they had dissented on the most pertinent precedent, *McConnell v. FEC*, and had continued to complain about it.

Second, the *Citizens United* decision strengthened the conservative contention that corporations have “personhood” and, therefore, enjoy the same rights as ordinary individuals, including the right of free speech. (For a compelling account of how the bizarre notion that corporations enjoy the same constitutional rights as human beings has evolved, see radio host Thom Hartmann’s book, Unequal Protection.)
Third, the *Citizens United* decision allowed corporations to spend unlimited funds in political contests. It was this aspect that caused President Obama to observe, during his January 27, 2010, State of the Union Address, “The Supreme Court reversed a century of law that I believe will open the floodgates for special interests—including foreign corporations—to spend without limit in our elections.” The decision granted corporations more rights than those of human beings.

The 2010 midterm elections demonstrated the lethality of the *Citizens United* decision. The non-partisan group, *OpenSecrets*.org calculated that, excluding Party Committees, $294 million was spent by outside groups. Conservative outside groups spent twice as much as did Liberal groups. For example, the US Chamber of Commerce, a conservative-leaning outside group, spent $32.8 million, more than the combined total of the two leading Liberal groups: the SEIU ($15.7 million) and the AFSCME ($12.6). (The McClatchey Newspapers reported that the US Chamber, which has foreign corporations as members, expected to spend more than $75 million in all forms of political support.)

Massive spending by outside groups influenced the outcome of the midterm election. In the Pennsylvania Senate race, outside spending was more than $12 million: $5.9 million was spent on ads attacking the Democratic Candidate (Joe Sestak), whereas only $1.9 was spent attacking the Republican (Pat Toomey); Sestak lost. In Illinois, $6.2 million was spent attacking the Democratic candidate (Alexi Giannoulias), whereas only $1.5 million was spent attacking the Republican (Mark Kirk); Giannoulias lost. There are many similar examples, including outgoing New York Democratic Congressman John Hall who attributed his defeat to the decision.

We’ve entered a new phase of American history, the *Corporatist* period where multinational corporations have unbridled political influence. This movement started before the *Citizens United* decision but the Roberts’ Supreme Court has accelerated the pace and thereby profoundly weakened our democracy.

Bob Burnett is a Berkeley writer. He can be reached at bobburnett@comcast.net

### 2010 Dispatches From the Edge Awards

**By Conn Hallinan**  
**Mon Jan 03 19:37:00 -0800 2011**

Each year the column Dispatches From The Edge awards news stories and newsmakers that fall under the category of “Are you serious?” Here are 2010’s winners.

**The Harry Potter Award** to the British technology company ATSC Ltd for its invention of a “wand” that, according to the company, detects explosives, drugs, and human remains for up to six miles by air and three fifths of a mile by land. The ADE 651 sells for $16,000 a unit.

The only problem is that it doesn’t work, which users might have figured out by reading the manual: the device has no batteries or internal parts. It is powered by “static electricity” generated by the holder walking in place. A wand-like antenna then points to the drugs, bodies, or explosives.

This past January ATSC Ltd was charged with fraud and banned by the British government. One ATSC source told the *New York Times*, “Everyone at ATSC knew that there was nothing inside the ADE 651,” and that the units cost only $250 to make.

But the wand was widely used in Iraq. Ammar Tuma, a member of the Iraqi parliament’s Security and Defense Committee bitterly attacked the company for causing “grave and massive losses of the lives of innocent Iraqi civilians, by the hundreds and the thousands, from attacks we thought we were immune to because we have this device.” The Iraqi Ministry of the Interior purchased 800 ADE 651s at a cost of $85 million.

The managing director of ATSC, Jim McCormack, staunchly defended the wand, which he claims the company has sold to 20 countries. He did admit, “one of the problems is that the machine looks primitive,” and said the company was turning out an upgraded model “that has flashing lights.”

Runner-up for this award was the British firm, Global Technology Ltd, which sold $10 million worth of very similar wands—the GT 200—to Mexico. The unit retails for $20,000 a piece. In one demonstration the GT 200 detected drugs in a Volkswagen sedan. After thoroughly searching the car, authorities turned up a bottle of Tylenol (suggesting that one should switch to Advil). Human Rights Watch says it is “troubled” by the use of the wand, which is widely used in Thailand and Mexico. “If people are actually being arrested and charged solely on the basis of its readings, that would be outrageous,” the group said in a press release.

A Mexican interior official defended the GT-200, however, claiming that it “works with molecules.” Hard to argue with science.

**The Golden Lemon Award** goes to the Conservative government of Canada for shelling out $8.5 billion to buy 65 Lockheed Martin F-35 stealth fighters. According to Defense Minister Peter MacKay, “This multi-role stealth fighter will help the Canadian forces defend the sovereignty of Canadian airspace.” Exactly whom that airspace is being defended from is not clear.

The contract also includes a $6.6 billion maintenance agreement, which is a good thing because the F-35 has a number of
“problems.” For instance, its engine shoots out sparks, and no one can figure out why. It is generally thought a bad idea for an engine to do that. There are several different types of F-35, and the vertical lift version of the aircraft doesn’t work very well. It seems the fan that cools the engine, doesn’t, and the panels that open for the vertical thrust, don’t. Also switches, valves and power systems are considered “unreliable.”

The F-35 is looking more and more like the old F-105 Thunderchief, a fighter-bomber used extensively at the beginning of the Vietnam War. Pilots nicknamed it the “Thud” (the sound the plane made when it hit the ground after failing to clear a runway, a rather common occurrence). One pilot said it had all the agility of a “flying brick,” thus its other nickname: the “lead sled.”

The U.S. is spending $382 billion to buy 2,457 F-35s, although the price tag keeps going up as more and more “problems” develop. Maintenance and spare parts for the aircraft will run several hundred billion extra.

One normally thinks of Canadians as sensible, but the country’s Conservative government is apparently as thickheaded as our own. Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently had a summit meeting on the arctic and didn’t invite the Inuit (whom most Americans call Eskimos).

Well, the F-35 may not fly very well, but it works just fine for Lockheed Martin: second quarter profits saw a jump from $727 million to $731 million over last year, and revenues rose to $11.44 billion, 3 percent over last year.

The Panjandrum Award to the U.S. military in Afghanistan. For those unfamiliar with the “Great Panjandrum,” it was an enormous rocket propelled explosive wheel developed by Great Britain for breaching the Atlantic Wall that Nazi Germany had built on the French coast to defend against amphibious invasions. Tested on a Devon beach, it roared ashore, turned smartly to port, and thundered into a bevy of admirals and generals, scattering them hither and yon. Thus “Panjandrum” became a metaphor for really silly military ideas.

And there is not a whole lot sillier idea than the one to deploy M1-Abrams tanks in southern Afghanistan. The M1 is a 68-ton behemoth, powered by a jet engine (miles per gallon is not its strong point). Since Afghanistan has virtually no roads and a good deal of the terrain is vertical—at least the part where the insurgents are ensconced—how the M1 is going to get around is not obvious.

However, one U.S. Marine officer told the Washington Post, “The tanks bring awe, shock and firepower. It’s pretty significant.” Right. Show the Wogs a tank and they will be begging for mercy.

Except the Taliban are quite familiar with tanks. The initial Soviet invasion included 1,800 of them, many of them T-72s. The T-72 is admittedly smaller than the Abrams—41 1/2 tons vs. 68 tons—but the former actually packed a bigger gun. The M1 sports a 120mm gun, the T-72 a 125 mm gun. T-72 carcasses are scattered all over Afghanistan, and the Taliban even managed to capture some of them.

Tanks are effective against stationary targets and other tanks. The Taliban don’t have tanks, and they don’t stick around when one shows up. But shocked and awed by their appearance? Don’t these people read history? Try “The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan,” by Lester Grau.

The George Orwell Award to the U.S. Defense Department for dropping the name of “Psychological Operations”—“Psyops”—for short—because the “term can sound ominous.” Instead Psyps will now be known as Military Information Support Operation, or MISO, which sounds like a Japanese soup.

Some military contractors, however, apparently didn’t get the memo about using names and acronyms that sound “ominous.” Northrop Grumman just successfully tested a radar system that will be attached to Predator and Reaper armed drones to allow the killer robots to “detect individuals walking over a wide area” and track vehicles, watercraft, people, and animals, as well as “stationary targets of interest.” Given that the drones pack Hellfire missiles and 500 lb bombs, you really don’t want to be “interesting” when they are around.

The news system is called the “Vehicle and Dismount Exploitation Radar” or “Vader” for short. Sound of heavy breathing is not included in the basic package.

The Rudyard Kipling Award to the Pentagon and its program to train officers for extended service in Afghanistan. For those unclear on this award, a few lines from Kipling’s poem, “Arithmetic on the Frontier” about Britain’s unsuccessful effort to subdue Afghanistan, and how one adds up the cost of occupation:

“A scrimmage in a Border Station--
A canton down some dark defile—
Two thousands pounds of education
Drop to a ten-rupee jezail*—
It appears some officers read Kipling. In spite of a high profile push by the Defense Department to recruit officers to serve in Afghanistan, the program is less than half filled, according to Pentagon officials.

*A jezail is a cheap, muzzle-loading rifle that took a heavy toll on British troops during their 19th century invasions of Afghanistan.

The Barn Door Award to the Department of Defense (yes, they do win a lot, but then they excel at winning awards) for telling employees and contractors not to read WikiLeaks documents online, because they are “classified.” Just close your eyes?

The Air Force went one step further and barred personnel from using computers where the documents were on line, thus underlining conventional wisdom in Washington: the Army is slow, the Marines are dumb, the Navy lies, and the Air Force is evil.

The Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Award (the author of Frankenstein) goes to the University of California at Berkeley, MIT, and Cornell University for using Defense Department money to turn the beetle, Mecyornithina torquata, into a cyborg. The beetle is fitted with an electronic backpack attached to the animal’s wing muscles, allowing scientists to control the beetle’s flight path.

The idea is to use the little beastie (actually, as beetles go, kind of a big beastie) to crawl or fly into areas where the “enemy” is. Once the “enemy” is identified, the military can target the area with bombs, rockets or artillery. This is a tad rough on the beetles.

According to researchers Michael Maharbiz and Hirotake Sato, the long-term goal is to “introduce synthetic interfaces and control loops” into other animals. “Working out the details in insects first will help us avoid mistakes and false starts in higher organisms, such as rats, mice, and ultimately people. And it allows us to postpone many of the deeper ethical questions about free will, among other things, that would become more pressing if this work took place on vertebrates.”

The Michele Bachmann Award to Australian legislator Bob Katter for sounding the alarm about a serious threat facing his constituents: “We have terrible problems with deadly flying foxes. They are going to kill more people than the Taipan snake in Australia.”

The flying fox is the world’s largest bat, also called the “fruit bat.” It has broad, flat molars and feeds on soft fruit, from which it extracts juice. By all accounts they are gentle and intelligent and don’t attack humans.
The Taipan snake, which can grow up to 12 feet, is considered the most venomous land snake in the world. However, the animal is shy and rarely bites people.

It is comforting to know that there are other legislators in the world just as whacko as U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn), who recently suggested that legislators “slit their wrists in a blood pact” to block health reform and said that people had to be “armed and dangerous” to block efforts to mitigate global warming.

You can read more of Conn Hallinan’s writings at dispatches-fromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com

The Public Eye: 2010: America Held Hostage

By Bob Burnett
Mon Jan 03 17:04:00 -0800 2011

If you were out of the United States for most of the year, or rely upon the mainstream media for all your “information,” you missed the big news of 2010: we’re having a class war and greed is winning. To get their way, the rich are holding working Americans hostage.

In September, new Census figures showed the income gap between America’s richest and poorest was the widest on record: “The top-earning 20 percent of Americans - those making more than $100,000 each year - received 49.4 percent of all income generated in the U.S., compared with the 3.4 percent earned by those below the poverty line [15 percent].” It’s one example of what Senator Bernie Sanders called “a war against the working families of America.”

This is not a covert action. Every day there’s a headline that some giant corporation had record profits and their executives got enormous bonuses; often on the same page there’s another story about record unemployment or middle-class folks who lost their homes to foreclosure. The question is why nobody but Bernie Sanders, and a few brave progressives, are willing to talk about our class war.

There are three explanations. One is that it’s become politically incorrect to talk about class warfare. In the US, by shouting “class warfare” every time progressives tried to raise taxes for the rich, conservatives have done an effective job of robbing the phrase of its potency. As a result, many Democrats – including the POTUS – run away from any suggestion that this country is turning into a plutocracy and regard it as too “radical” to suggest that Republicans are engaging in class warfare, holding Americans hostage.

Another explanation is that the conservative media has become so powerful that most commentators on mainstream outlets like CNN and THE NEW YORK TIMES are afraid to mention the systematic war on working families waged by America’s power elite. It’s a subject that’s not popular with rich media CEOs. And, when pundits do write about this subject, they get a slew of angry mail suggesting they are (gasp!) a “socialist.”

But the third and most troubling explanation is that our fellow citizens suffer from a collective psychosis: Americans think the US can’t operate without the rich and so they are, in effect, protecting them.

Groucho Marx told a joke about a man who complains to a psychiatrist, “My brother thinks he’s a chicken.” The shrink responds, “That’s terrible! Why don’t you tell him the truth?” The man answers, “I would, but we need the eggs.”

Americans don’t tell the truth about the class war because we believe we need the “eggs.” As a nation we’ve developed Stockholm syndrome and fallen under the spell of our captors. We’ve succumbed to the Republican message machine.

Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, famously said: “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” That’s what’s happened to our national discussion of economic policy, Republicans have sold the big lie to the American people.

Multiple times every day, GOP talking
heads claim “government is the problem” not a broken economic system. Republican shills also contend “trickle-down economics works,” that rich folks buying diamonds and Ferraris catalyzes the consumer economy. It doesn’t – it’s part of the problem – but average Americans don’t see that. They believe that if Rush Limbaugh pays higher taxes it will hurt the economy because he won’t be able to buy as many Arturo Fuente cigars. We’ve fallen in love with the folks running the prison. Rush Limbaugh fans want to be just like him.

While the US is being looted, many American are content to sit in front of their TV and watch American Idol or a similar show that suggests if you are lucky, you too can join the ranks of the rich and famous. Not only are we not angry at the rich, we want to be just like them!

What can we do to snap America out of its trance and reverse our nation’s disastrous course? Obviously, those of us who have the stomach for it can continue to write about the class war, tell the truth about what’s happening to our beloved country. But what’s really needed is a coordinated progressive message campaign to counter the evil Republican spinmeisters. That’s what linguists George Lakoff and Drew Westen have been suggesting for two years. We need to counter the Republican spinmeisters with our own 24/7 message: “Your brother is not a chicken! You don’t need the eggs, they’re poison!”

But a positive message starts with a clear statement of what we are for: A fair economy that works for everyone, not just the rich and powerful. An economy where everyone works, where full employment is more important than record profits. An economy that promotes democracy, not hostage taking. This is an economy that operates from the moral basis proposed by Thomas Jefferson, who wrote, “The care of human life and happiness… is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

Bob Burnett is a Berkeley writer. He can be reached at bobburnett@comcast.net

Eclectic Rant: Facebook and Privacy

By Ralph E. Stone
Mon Jan 03 17:33:00 -0800 2011

I am not here to bash Facebook. (Did I hear Mark Zuckerberg’s sigh of relief?) However, I do want to sound a note of caution to present and future Facebook users.

I have a Facebook account. I only include publicly available information such as, for example, my Daily Planet articles. Even if I had dirty laundry, I wouldn’t air it on Facebook, nor would I disclose intimate details of my life. I am always surprised, however, what some of my “friends” disclose on Facebook.

“Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.” Now this sounds like a worthy mission. But know what you are signing up for when you join Facebook by reading its “terms” and “privacy,” which can be found at the bottom of the Facebook page.

A little background on Facebook: Zuckerberg is the founder, CEO, and 24 percent owner of Facebook, a privately-held company headquartered in Palo Alto, California. Facebook has almost 600 million users, nearly a twelfth of the world’s population. In a single day about one billion pieces of content are posted on Facebook.

Nearly half of Americans are on Facebook, but 70 percent of Facebook users live outside the United States. Facebook is operative in 75 languages.

Facebook’s 2010 revenues are expected to reach $2 billion, which puts it on par with Google and ahead of Yahoo. It has just started to reach its earning potential; it has an estimated present value of $55 billion but could reach $200 billion by 2015.

Generally companies are free to compile and sell personal information, once that information becomes public. Experts in the field of Internet privacy generally agree that Internet privacy does not really exist. Privacy advocates believe that it should exist. For example, the Federal Trade Commission convened a series of public roundtable discussions about the issue of online privacy, which will result in a staff report.

The following websites are informative on the subject of internet privacy. <www.aclu.org/technology-and-liberty/internet-privacy> <www.privacyrights.org/netprivacy.html>

Should Facebook users be worried about personal privacy? Consider that early this year, Facebook announced that it was changing its privacy settings in order to make more user information public. This announcement caused an uproar in the media and the public. Facebook was urged to increase transparency about how user information is shared with third parties and encouraged to install more robust protections for this sharing.

Facebook’s announcement is in accord with Zuckerberg’s view of privacy.

“That privacy was no longer a social norm. The rise of social networking online means that people no longer have an expectation of privacy. People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time.”

I suspect many Facebook users would agree with Zuckerberg’s view of privacy.

Let’s consider some of the things you agree to when you join Facebook. Even after you remove information from your profile or delete your account, copies of that information may remain viewable elsewhere if it has been shared with others, was distributed under your privacy settings, or was copied or stored by other users. And Facebook has the right to retain certain information to prevent identity theft and other misconduct even if you requested deletion.

Remember also, that subject to your privacy and application settings, you give Facebook a non-exclusive, transferable, sublicenseable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use anything that you put on Facebook. This right ends when you delete your content or unless, of course, your content has been shared with others, and they have not deleted it. Make sure to check your privacy and application settings.

Advertising is Facebook’s major source of income. It has an advantage that advertisers cannot resist. Facebook can target consumers better than most others because it knows so much about you, such as where you live, your age, marital status, education level, what you are interested in, and so forth. How? Because you told Facebook about yourself and you gave it permission to use your information to target you for the delivery of advertisements. And Facebook may gather information on whether you acted on the advertisements. Thus, a profile of your buying habits can be developed. As Zuckerberg put it in a recent blog post, “to try to help people share information with their friends about things they do on the web.”

Facebook has attracted big name advertisers including Coca-Cola, Adidas, JP Morgan, Blockbuster, Verizon, Sony Pictures and Condé Nast. As Carol Kruse, vice president, global interactive marketing, the Coca-Cola Company, put it, “With Facebook Ads, our brands can become a part of the way users communicate and interact on Facebook.”

You can use your privacy settings to limit how your name and profile picture will be used for commercial purposes.

Facebook warns users that it may disclose information if it has a “good faith” belief
that the release is required by law. This includes sharing information with other companies, lawyers, courts or other government entities. What is “good faith?” There does not appear to be any Facebook requirement to notify its users when it releases personal information. Can we be sure that government agencies -- CIA, FBI, Homeland Security -- aren’t mining this data? Do you care?

Facebook is here to stay. I would caution you to carefully read Facebook’s “terms” and “privacy policy” to make sure you know what you are agreeing to before signing up. You are bound by the provisions whether you read them or not. I would also recommend every user carefully check their privacy settings. Finally, before posting information on a social network like Facebook, just assume that the whole world may get access to this information. When you “let it all hang out,” the information may come back to bite you when, for example, interview for employment, apply for a loan, seek a security clearance, etc.

For background information on Mark Zuckerberg and the inner workings of Facebook, I recommend Time magazine’s Person of the Year: Mark Zuckerberg issue (Dec. 27, 2010) I also recommend the docudrama, The Social Network, a story about the founding of Facebook.

Senior Power: “Graying prisons,” early release, and ‘assisted living’

By Helen Ripper Wheeler
Mon Jan 03 17:01:00 -0800 2011

The U.S. prison population grew from over 319,000 in 1980 to nearly 1.5 million in 2005. Elderly inmates represent the fastest growing segment of federal and state prisons. Conservative estimates suggest that this population now represents 33%, reflecting the general aging of society.

Definitions states have established for elderly prisoners vary; some have no official age designation for the elderly prisoner population. The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that the number of men and women in state and federal prisons age 55 and older grew 76 percent between 1999 and 2008, the latest year available, from 43,300 to 76,400. The growth of the entire prison population grew only 18 percent in that period. The aging inmate population has created new challenges for states.

Inmates tend to age faster than members of the general population, on average 7 to 10 years older than their chronological age. Older inmates tend to develop age-related health problems earlier. The National Institute of Corrections lists arthritis, hypertension, ulcer disease, prostate problems and myocardial infarction among the most common chronic diseases among elderly inmates. Diabetes, Hepatitis C and cancer are also common. General accommodations and protection against younger offenders also increase the cost of housing older inmates. Stress contributes to accelerated aging.

Corrections professionals, academics and policymakers are considering whether some older inmates should be released through medical (so called assisted living) and early release programs. Proponents argue that once released, inmates may be eligible for Medicare, Social Security or veterans’ benefits. “Prisons aren’t geared to the needs and vulnerabilities of older people. In the prison environment, there are a number of unique physical tasks that must be performed every day in order to retain independence,” according to Brie Williams, M.D., a geriatrician at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. [Graying Prisons; states face challenges of an aging inmate population. By Carrie Abner. State News. Nov/Dec 2006]

The Project for Older Prisoners (POPS), directed by Jonathan Turley, at George Washington University Law School, D.C., encompasses a number of prison projects in which students are involved as volunteers or work for academic credit. Some assist individual low-risk prisoners over the age of 55 to help them obtain paroles, pardons, or alternative forms of incarceration. In a typical case, a student will prepare an extensive background report on a prisoner to determine the likelihood of recidivism. If the risk is low, the student will then locate housing and support for the prisoner and help prepare the case for a parole hearing. In five states (Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Columbia), law students interview and evaluate older and geriatric inmates in obtaining parole or other forms of release from incarceration.

Turley testified in the House Judiciary Committee on prison reform and older prisoners in December 2007 that some prisons are 200% to 300% over capacity and rehabilitation work programs have been eliminated to make room for bunks. It is no longer a question of whether California’s prisoners will be released, but which ones.

POPS proposed a risk-based approach in dealing with California’s burgeoning elderly population. The decision made on the basis of societal and not political risks, makes risk-based decisions that select the lowest-risk individuals for early release. As a general rule, people become less dangerous as they age. In males, the greatest drop in recidivism occurs around age 30 and tends to continue to fall. The average cost of an older prisoner is two to three times that of younger prisoner. In 2006-7 there were almost 20,000 prisoners over 55, including 717 over 70.

The American Civil Liberties Union estimates that elderly prisoners — the fastest growing segment of the prison population, largely because of tough sentencing laws — are three times more expensive to incarcerate than younger inmates. ACLU estimates that it costs about $72,000 to house an elderly inmate for a year, compared to $24,000 for a younger prisoner.

In New York State as of January 1, there were 1,836 inmates older than age 60 serving time. Officials say 77 percent of those inmates were in custody on violent felonies.

Information released after a public records request from Associated Press indicated that Washington State had 2,495 inmates age 50 or older, the state’s definition of elderly. A new assisted-living facility at Coyote Ridge has a capacity of 74 inmates. To qualify, an inmate must be disabled and be considered a minimum security risk. The average age in the assisted living unit was 59, a figure skewed slightly by three inmates in their 30’s with disabilities. Nearly all the inmates in the assisted-living unit were in for murder or sex crimes, although a few are serving time for assault, drug or property crimes.

Many states are studying ways to reduce the number of elderly prisoners. New or expanded early release programs have been adopted by some.. But a study by the Vera Institute of Justice in New York City found the laws have rarely been used, in part because of political considerations and complicated reviews. Early release for infirm inmates would be fine, but prisoners need to be able to pay for the nursing care they need.

And this is an international problem. Japanese prisons face a swelling elderly population. Mari Yamaguchi reported that Japan’s population is aging faster than anywhere else. [Dec. 5, 2010 Washington Post] The number of Japanese prisoners aged 60 or older has doubled over the past decade to more than 10,000. The elderly now represent 16 percent of the nation’s inmates. Though Japan’s crime rate remains relatively low, the spike in elderly crime is another sign of the social and economic strains on the nation. An entire floor has been converted into a pilot geriatric ward at Onomichi Prison,
near the city of Hiroshima. The government has also invested $100 million to build larger facilities at three other prisons around the country, and more are planned. Most of the inmates have been convicted of shoplifting and theft, reflecting the financial pressures and lack of family support facing many older Japanese amid a lengthy economic slump and fraying social cohesion. About half are repeat offenders, including some who steal to get caught and return to the relative security of prison, where at least shelter - if Spartan - and three meals a day, as well as a twice-weekly bath, are guaranteed.

“The number of senior inmates has been surging, and there is no sign of decrease,” according to Koki Maezawa, a Justice Ministry official in charge of prison services. “It’s a serious problem that the entire society must tackle so that offenders don’t keep coming back to prison once they get out.”

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

Saturday, December 18, 2010: Holiday Food Baskets were delivered to Berkeley senior housing tenants who had indicated interest in such bounty. Fresh fruit and vegetables, chickens, and other groceries were provided by the City of Berkeley Fire Department, San Francisco Fire Credit Union, Berkeley Lions Club, Ashby Plumbing & Heating supply, Berkeley Bowl, Monterey Market, Trader Joe’s, and Whole Foods. They were delivered by “many volunteers & Berkeley Firefighters.”

On Mental Health: Adequate Housing Is An Inalienable Right

By Jack Bragen
Tue Jan 04 16:38:00 -0800 2011

Affordable, safe, accessible, clean housing should be provided for all persons with major mental illnesses, across the board. This is an area that creates numerous and persistent problems for those who are economically and otherwise affected by having these psychiatric diseases.

Numerous persons with mental illness experience a lonely death on the streets because of the fact that housing was not provided. While others are assaulted in or near their own homes, and their housing has become place of dread or terror. Some must become place of dread or terror. Some must

Moreover, there are some mentally ill people who still live with parents, well into their middle age. I would have done this if my parents permitted it; I was kicked out for good in my early twenties.

I have experienced several housing situations in which I was bullied, intimidated or harassed by a criminal element. This took place in an apartment complex intended for mentally ill people, in which the staff that was supposed to be supervising allowed people other than tenants to live there. It took place in another apartment complex that had low rental, and the landlord wasn’t very selective about who was allowed to rent. In another housing situation, it was the staff persons who were the bullies, and the tenants were made to feel criminalized.

One of the problems that cause bad housing situations to exist is that these apartment complexes are treated as moneymakers for the corporations that run them. The regulations that are supposed to protect the tenants either aren’t there or they aren’t being enforced. When practicable, the corporations that own these places will fire qualified staff who might require more salary, and will replace them with unqualified people, and give them minimal hours. Whistleblowers, whether they are tenants or staff, are subject to retaliation.

People in the middleclass as well as those who are affluent don’t want housing for mentally ill people in their neighborhood. People believe that mentally ill people will assault their grandparents and will sell drugs to their daughters. They see mental health housing as a factor that will devalue their property. Because of all this, it can be very hard to get mental health housing approved in a number of neighborhoods. Those who want to create such a facility may be forced to build it in a high crime, or blighted area.

Public attitude toward the mentally ill isn’t always very good. It can be an unpopular move for a politician to push for a costly project that will help mentally ill people. Since popularity is necessary for any politician to keep their job, these projects can be few and far between.

However, if people would look at the amount of suffering caused by inadequate housing for mentally ill people, they might change their minds about funding it.

Arts & Entertainment

Around & About—Theater & the Performing Arts ...

By Ken Bullock
Tue Jan 04 17:08:00 -0800 2011

Looking back on a year of theater, a few moments spring to mind, more than a view of the whole of what took place ... The last scene, especially, in Central Works’ Penelope’s Odyssey, with Terry Lamb’s outrageous portrait of the wily Odysseus as a raucous drunk, retelling war stories, caper to a collaborative show that displayed, once again, what makes that little company unique—and plucky. Jan Zvaifler, Leon-tyne Mbele-Mbong, Matt Lai all played at the top of their game—as did director John Patrick Moore, playwright-lighting designer Gary Graves, soundman Greg Scharpen and costumer Tammy Berlin. In the same room at the City Club, Just Theater produced a very contemporary rendering of the Arabian Nights, Jason Grote’s ‘1001’, which also showed the theatricality a small company could create onstage with limited means, in many ways more artistically successful than more lavish stagings locally of the same material.

Another remarkable production at the City Club, where Central works is in residence: Galileo’s Daughters, written, directed and designed by Giulio Perrone for his Inferno Theatre, displaying an intimate panorama of the innovations of 20th century European theater with a committed tiny ensemble, including Michael McCamish of Berkeley, whose solo show with Sun & Moon, Two- bird, was so engaging a year ago.

The professional theaters around the Berkeley area had memorable moments: for the Aurora, the most memorable to me was Joel Drake Johnson’s The First Grade, which seemed at first to be going in the direction of so many prefabricated contemporary American comedies-of-manners that are really live-on-stage TV sitcoms—yet turned out to be real theater about, in part, the way we’ve internalized that broadcast glibness, that passive-aggressive stance in our workday and private lives to gloss over our increasing isolation. Artistic director Tom Ross and a fine cast led by Julia Brothers distinguished themselves.

At The Rep, it was more the imported than the local, more the intriguing than the fully realized, with Broadway star Mandy Pantikin, supported by excellent acting and tech design, in a wildly uneven Compul-
sion, worth seeing for its values of professionalism—and the best moments of *The Great Game*, a three-part marathon of short plays by various hands, British and American, staged by the UK’s Tricycle Theatre, something that, whatever its limitations, surpassed much of what we call socially conscious theater here.

CalShakes, in Orinda, the descendant of the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, continues every summer to assemble some of the best professional actors in the Bay Area to play *The Bard—but Shaw, Wilde and Chekhov as well. The addition of Shakespeare scholar Philippa Kelly as dramaturg has been notable, already showing a sharpening of values in production that before were intangible—or absent altogether.

And another seasonal tradition, Woodminster Summer Musicals, at the splendid WPA amphitheater in the Oakland hills, goes on producing diverting shows of quality after almost 45 years of service by the Schlader family, despite the loss of co-founder Jim Schlader.

Berkeley Playhouse consolidated with the Julia Morgan Center for family and youth theater productions, including YMTC—Youth Musical Theatre Company.

Shotgun’s ongoing onslaught of new and not-so-new plays was topped, this year by the splendid ensemble production of Jenny Schwartz’s *God’s Ear*, staged by choreographer-turned-director Erica Chong Shuch. Ambitious design-based shows, both outside and in, continued with Jon Tracy’s *The Salt Plays* and Mark Jackson’s rendering of Schiller’s *Mary Stuart* as prison drama, sans Cagney, but with a charged-up Scott Coopwood.

Small companies that not only survive but thrive include plucky Ragged Wing Ensemble, who’ve staged outdoor spectacles and launched their youth ensemble, displaying ongoing dedication to a theater based on movement, stylization and the materialization of values that often seem intangible in most stage productions. Impact Theatre, downstairs from the pizzaria in Laval’s Subterranean, has continued, into their 14th year, to expand ambitiously their entertainment-plus-new-playwright scheme, notably with Evren Odcikin’s direction of *The Play About the Naked Guy*, by David Bell, which caught the attention of the whole Bay Area.

After finding a new home at the Marion Greene Theatre, by the Fox Theatre in Oakland’s Uptown, TheatreFirst has gone on producing very solid shows, mostly from North America, under the new, capable artistic direction of Michael Storm, transitioning from its more internationalist approach in the years under Clive Chafer’s distinguished direction.

And Wilde Irish, Berkeley’s Hibernian histrions, keep up their tradition of Bloomsday James Joyce events and spirited staged readings.

The Berkeley area continues, too, to be fortunate in its community theaters: Actors Ensemble of Berkeley, over 50 years old, has undergone something of a renaissance the last year or so, with such good shows as a choice *Blithe Spirit*, directed by that trouper Hector Correa, and a diverting *Winter’s Tale*, helmed by Jeremy Cole, as well as a new series of staged readings—something new for many Bay Area troupes, though not for Subterranean Shakespeare, whose marathons of *The Bard’s* canon, plus selections from his contemporaries, keep tradition alive weekly at the Unitarian Fellowship on Cedar.

Contra Costa Civic Theater in El Cerrito passed the 50 year mark, going on with engaging entertainment for the community. Altarena Playhouse, in Alameda, more than 70 years old, weighs in with a diversity of plays under Frederick Chacon’s artistic directorship. And the Masquers Playhouse, in Point Richmond, wrapped up this year, their 53rd, with Robert Estes’ production of *Other People’s Money*—an apt title for 2010.

Virago, the five year-old troupe based in Alameda, continued adding new forms to their repertoire ... after engaging versions in the past of *Three Penny Opera* and *Candide*, they staged a present-day cabaret-style *La Boheme* this year—in addition to continuing their programs of new dramas and comedies, including staged readings.

And local storyteller-to-music Jovelyn Richards gave swan-song performances of her unique, contemporary African-American tales at La Pena—but we may see her again, after her successes in Budapest!

Some of the best theater around is by the many local opera companies, often the smallest and most adventurous. Berkeley Western Edge Opera opened in their brilliant new home at El Cerrito High with Mark Streshinsky’s wonderful staging of *Don Giovanni*, with Eugene Brancoveneau shining in the lead, with splendid support on all sides. Oakland Opera Theatre was dormant this year, but its innovative shows will hopefully spring back again. Smaller, itinerant companies, memorably Harriet March Page and Mark Alburger’s Cabaret Opera and Fred Winthrop’s Verismo Opera, respectively brought exciting new works and intimate versions of the old war horses to local venues.

CalPerformances, sharing the Zellerbach Playhouse with the University’s own productions and Zellerbach Auditorium with a plethora of events, produced Zenshinzia Kabuki in both traditional and modern plays, a refreshing look into a great theatrical tradition too little staged here, and this May will feature the return of Ireland’s extraordinary Druid company, with a Martin McDonagh play staged by their brilliant founder, Garry Hynes.

Otherwise, I remember, throughout the Bay, shows like Oleg Liptsin’s innovative solo piece, with iPhone and extraordinary comic acting, of Gogol’s *The Nose* and his direction of a telescoped-down *Three Sisters*—both, in some performances, in an Embarcadero pier, utilizing that space impressively, with unusual video counterpoint. And John O’Keefe, co-founder of Berkeley’s 70s troupe, the Blake Street Hawkeyes, teamed up with Noh actors and musicians in an unusual, spirited sample of a projected piece of mytho-theatrics around the Shinto creation myths, wild and full of O’Keefe’s humor and the hypnotic style and sounds of Noh in syncopation. Larry Reed’s Shadowlight Theater goes on with its innovations, many available on DVD, filmed by multi-talented Reed himself.

No telling what will spring up around here, any given moment, even in such scrapping times as these. But so far the survival rate of the long and short-term standbys has also been extraordinary—so, on into the second decade of this century of performance!

* — At The Rep, Mike Daisey’s solo show of *The Agony & the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* and *The Last Cargo Cult* go into previews on January 11; the Lemony Snicket—Nathaniel Stookey hit, *The Composer is Dead*, continues through the 17th.Tickets: $29-$73. 647-2949; berkeleyrep.org

— It’s the last week for Belinda Taylor’s local hit, *Becoming Julia Morgan*, directed by Barbara Oliver at the Morgan-designed City Club—but the show is sold out! Future performances will be announced online at: juliamorganproject.org

— Chanticleers, the Castro Valley community theater, whose spirited production of Neil Simon’s *Broadway Bound*, directed by Oakland’s Marty Nemko, with Sue Trigg and Chris Chapman as the parents of the precocious stagestruck brothers, was a memorable show last year, hosts their annual Crow awards, with scenes from last year’s shows, including *Broadway Bound*, at 7 this
“Controversial Issues in the Schools.” Jean asserted that it is the right of the student to hear both sides of a controversial issue in order to learn to distinguish between fact and opinion. And that it is also the right and responsibility of the teacher to express her own opinion. Jean believed the classroom should be a place for debate and discussion. Jean wrote,

“The child is the first to realize when the issues which are so important to him are being avoided and neglected... As school becomes less helpful and meaningful to him, the farther away he draws from any influence it tries to wield over him. Education as an important force in a democratic society loses its purpose. If education continues to follow its mistaken policy of ‘impartiality’ which in reality is consent to the status of the moment, then it fails in at least one function which is vital to the continuance of democratic society.”

In 1952 during the McCarthy Era, Jean and Frank Wilkinson were both called before the State Committee on Un-American Activities and refused to answer questions based on the protections of the First and Fifth Amendments to the US Constitution. As a result, Frank was fired from the Housing Authority. Jean became one of the first public school teachers to be fired by the Los Angeles Board of Education for refusing to cooperate with the Committee. Jean took her case to the State Superior Court and lost, with one judge saying Jean had “sowed the dragon seeds of treason in the classroom.”

Jean went to work as a private tutor and taught in private schools, while Frank became an organizer in the struggle to abolish the House Un-American Committee (HUAC). Their three children, Jeffry (born 1942), Tony (born 1945) and Jo (born 1947), quickly learned that their family was different from the neighbors. The Wilkinson family was under constant FBI surveillance, the phones were tapped, and there were death threats against Frank. In 1960 the house was fire bombed forcing the family to move.

On May 1, 1961, Frank went to prison for taking the First Amendment when called to testify before HUAC in Atlanta, Georgia. Jean was left to raise the kids, pay the bills, as well as hold speaking engagements about Frank’s case. Jean traveled to Washington, D.C., to appeal to President Kennedy with a petition for clemency which was denied.

In 1965, Frank and Jean divorced, and Jean moved back to Berkeley where she was rehired in the public school system after years of being black-listed. She was the one of the first history teachers to teach Women’s Studies in a secondary school in Berkeley. She went back to school for her Masters Degree in Education at UC Berkeley in 1970, and retired from teaching in 1977. In 1980, Jean was a unit developer under a grant from the U.S. Education Department for “In Search of Our Past: Units in Women’s History.” Once retired, Jean began working on an anthology of women writers, collecting stories about girls coming of age from around the world. She, Lyn Reese and Phillis Koppelman, fellow educators, published I’m On My Way Running in 1983.

In 1987 under a second U.S. Education Department grant she co-edited “Women in the World: Annotated History Resources for the Secondary Student.”

Jean was a long time fighter for peace and social justice. One of the proudest moments of Jean’s very long life was on June 22, 1982, when at the age of 68, Jean was arrested during an anti-nuclear demonstration involving 1,300 nonviolent protesters at Lawrence Livermore Lab in the East Bay. In Jean’s later life, one of her greatest joys was frequently traveling internationally. She also loved music – Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger & The Weavers, Edith Piaf and Three Tenors. Jean is survived by her three children, Jeffry, Tony and Jo; her 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; nephews Richard Evans and Don Evans, and nieces Pamela Wilkinson, Barbara Harrington, and Elinor Reed; and scores of friends and admirers. No memorial service is planned at this time. Jean was a founding member of the International Museum of Women (IMOW) and contributions to IMOW may be made in her name. On-line contributions can be made at www.imow.org and checks sent to IMOW, PO Box 190038, San Francisco, CA 94119-0038. If you have questions you may contact Irene Morrison at IMOW, 415-543-4669, ext 27.

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