



EDIA

EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

The Voice of the Residents

A publication of the

Excelsior District Improvement Association

Founded in 1942 – Incorporated in 1962



Changes at Crocker Amazon Park

The renovation of the soccer fields at Crocker Amazon Park is now underway. The renovation is funded jointly by the city and the City Fields Foundation, a foundation established by the Fisher family. The project will entail demolition of a concrete bleacher, re-grading and construction of a drainage system for the fields, laying down of artificial turf in lieu of the previous grass playing surface, building of restrooms, new field lighting and a number of other improvements. For those with access to the web, more details about the project and some photographs can be found through links on our website: <http://excelsiorsf.org/> under "Current News". The renovations will increase the number of playing fields to five and according to the developer will

increase the useability of the fields due primarily to reduced down time because of improved drainage and rapid drying of the fields after rains. An informal survey of park users and residents yielded wide spread support for the field improvements.

Controversy did arise over the planned removal of many trees surrounding the project area. For readers unfamiliar with the park, the rectangular renovation area is surrounded by trees, with an avenue of trees on both sides of paved paths on the western and northern portion of the fields. These paths are heavily used by walkers, folks doing tai chi, joggers, dog walkers and others. Notice was presumably given of the intention to remove many of the trees as part of the field renovation as required by city ordinance. However, many park users and local residents were largely unaware of the extent of the tree removal until notices were posted on the trees themselves or could not read the notices due to language issues. A representative from the City Fields did ultimately appear before an EDIA meeting to explain the project. However, as far as we can ascertain Excelsior residents had little real opportunity to provide input to the project, particularly the tree removal and changes that might have been made to reduce the arboreal carnage (see photo)). It appears the contention of Rec and Park Department is that many of the trees to be removed had diseases, particularly the Monterrey Pines and that the Monterrey Cypress and eucalyptus were inappropriate trees for the location, in dangerous condition because of poor maintenance, or otherwise appropriate for removal. To many who heard the presentations by the City Fields Foundation and Rec and Park, the perception was that we

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Gardening in an Excelsior style

Gary Monteleone is a lifelong resident of the Excelsior and a long term gardener. He comes from a gardening tradition having learned many of his cultural practices from his father, also a gardener. Ultimately much of his style of gardening probably derives from traditions of parts of rural Italy particularly his choices in vegetable crops and his practice of seed saving from the open pollinated varieties he generally grows. These traditions have been well adopted over the years to our particular Excelsior conditions. Gary grows chard in abundance throughout much of our year, as well as spinach, peas, lettuce, parsley, rosemary and other herbs. In the warmer months he plants squash, tomatoes and tomatillos, frequently experimenting with different varieties of tomatoes, also generally open pollinated. His focus is on "heritage", older varieties. As is seemingly the case with many confirmed gardeners, Gary is also constantly experimenting, this year having planted bok choy. These seemed to have bolted prematurely and he likely will experiment with different planting times.

In his front and backyard Gary tends roses, camellias, rhododendrons, apples, "drumsticks", passiflora, calendula, lilies, snapdragons and many other flowering plants. His growing site has good south-

Various Heirloom Tomatoes



ern exposure with full sun and wind exposure, and is predominately of a sandy soil liberally amended annually with manure.

Our thanks to Gary Monteleone for showing us his beautiful artisan garden.

For color photographs of the garden - please check our website: <http://excelsiorsf.org/> Choose the topic "About The Excelsior" and you will see a link to "Gardening with an Excelsior Accent".



Squash Blossom

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were dealing with a fait accompli and by the time the issue came to our attention the important decisions had been made. Revisions were made to the plans to somewhat reduce the number of trees to be removed as a result of neighborhood actions.

However, we were somewhat concerned that the city department advocating for the fields program was also in charge of the tree maintenance that was so deficient as to help justify the extensive removal. We also note that two of the same tree species that are deemed largely inappropriate for Crocker are extensively planted in many other city parks and with better maintenance do not seem to require immediate removal.

While we wish the City Fields Foundation success with these renovations and welcome the improvements to the soccer fields, we wonder if public notice requirements in these circumstances were adequate and other issues were adequately addressed and we extend our thanks to those residents who became aware of the plans and took the trouble to make them more of a local public issue than otherwise would have been the case.

Talk to Him/Her

A regular theme that has arisen at some recent EDIA meetings is what to do when responding to various acts of vandalism, graffiti, malicious mischief, in our neighborhood. We are mostly all aware of the importance of calling 911 in the event of an emergency situation. But what to do when your tires are slashed or a car window broken over night? Call the officers at Ingleside Station. Assuming you do not observe the perpetrators in the act, it is still important to make a non-emergency call. There is no all seeing satellite hovering over the Excelsior that keeps the authorities advised of what transpires here (at least that we're aware of!). What the police are not aware of, they cannot respond to. You may think that a block long line of broken glass alongside parked cars is clear enough but that frequently is not the case. Talk to the officers. Sometimes they can increase patrols or take other measures. In the event of graffiti, they can take photographs that may aid in identifying the perpetrator or even use a tag to compile intelligence about what is happening with gang activity. We have been advised that the S. F. P. D. even has an officer with a specialty in graffiti interpretation.

The non-emergency telephone number for Ingleside Station is: (415) 553-0123.

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Changes to Craut and Silver

A series of changes to traffic control have been made on Craut Street and Silver Ave. Stop signs on Silver were relocated to the intersection of Lisbon and Silver and stop signs at Silver and Craut were removed.



Craut has been turned into a one-way street with traffic allowed solely in a northerly direction.

Residents of the area have been acutely aware of the wildly unrealistic assumption that Craut could function as a two-way street while parking was also allowed on the street. Automotive traffic moved at all on the street because residents did their best to park partially on the sidewalk and exercise a lot of consideration when dealing with two-way traffic. A local etiquette of non-assertive driving, letting the first driver in the block reach a corner, seemed to mostly have prevailed. This custom could be tested at times, particularly when Cala was busy and now with the increased traffic generated by Manila Market. Few locals oppose the change to Craut.

However, the implementation of the change seemed haphazard. Notices of the proposed changes were posted months before the implementation. One day work crews appeared, made the changes and disappeared. No flashing lights, no large signs to alert drivers to the changes. Ten minutes of casual observation at the intersection of Silver and Craut, on the evening of the changes, yielded a count of eight wrong way vehicles driving up Craut, and three near collisions. About half the vehicles driving west on Silver stopped for a Stop sign that no longer existed. Evening calls to our new 311 number yielded the information that the Department of Parking and Traffic was closed for the day and a call to Ingleside Station resulted in a basic "not our business" response. This was not reassuring. Next day one DPT person who was involved directly in the changes was kind enough to respond, acknowledged the problems that changes like this create but cited the limitations of resources as a reason for the lack of warning signs. This also was not reassuring. Resources are always limited and presumably a few days of temporary warning lights and re-usable signage is a modest expense in the grander scale of things

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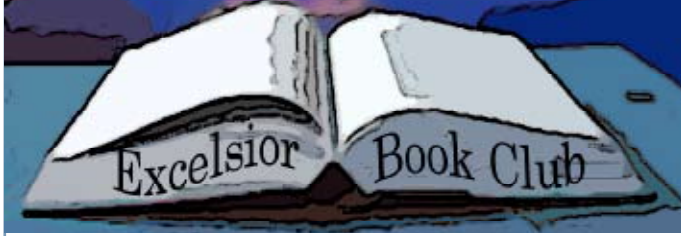
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A Project of the Excelsior District Improvement Association



THANKS to Paige, the hostess with the most-est, for hosting our July book club meeting, where we discussed John McPhee's "Uncommon Carriers".

The Book Club is currently on summer vacation. Our next meeting of the Excelsior Book Club will be TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 7:00 PM, at the home of the Rosens, 608 Anderson Street (Bernal Heights), between Crescent & Ogden.

Our September reading will be two non-fiction memoirs of life in the Middle East :

(1) "I saw Ramallah" by Mourid Barghouti (1997, 182 pages): Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti tells of his brief return to the West Bank where he lived as a boy and now may visit only by permission of the Israeli occupation authority. Identified as a dissident in the aftermath of 1967, he was expelled from Egypt where he had been a university student, and separated from his family after he had become a new father. Barghouti has since lived as a displaced person in several different countries, a member of the Palestinian diaspora. With a poet's eye for detail and language (the book is beautifully translated), Barghouti, who now lives in Cairo , intersperses the story of his homecoming with his history of journeys across the Arab world.

(2) "Reading Lolita in Tehran " by Azar Nafisi (2003, 284 pages): This memoir is a moving testament to the power of art and its ability to change people's lives. Literature professor Nafisi returned to her native Iran after a long education abroad, remained there for some 18 years, and left in 1997 for the United States , where she now teaches at Johns Hopkins. In 1995, after resigning from her job as a professor at a university in Tehran due to repressive policies, Azar Nafisi invited seven of her best female students to attend a weekly study

group on great Western literature in her home. Since the books they read were officially banned by the government, the women were forced to meet in secret, often sharing photocopied pages of the illegal novels. Though most of the women were shy and intimidated at first, they were emboldened by the forum and used the meetings as a springboard for debating the social, cultural, and political realities of living under strict Islamic rule. Each author is cast in a new light, showing, for instance, how to interpret *The Great Gatsby* against the turbulence of the Iranian revolution. *Lolita* becomes a brilliant metaphor for life in the Islamic republic.

The four novels discussed are:

"Lolita" by Vladimir Nabokov

"The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald

"Daisy Miller" by Henry James

"Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen

There are a few copies of "I Saw Ramallah" available at various SF Library branches. It is available at Amazon.com for \$10.20 (the Anchor paperback edition is available direct from Amazon). "Reading Lolita in Tehran " has more copies at the SF library, and is available at Amazon for \$10.17, and is also available at many local bookstores.

For on-line references, try these links:

For "Reading Lolita in Tehran " , this link is to several book reviews:

http://www.reviewsofbooks.com/reading_lolita_in_tehran/

For an interview with Azar Nafisi:

<http://www.identitytheory.com/interviews/birnbaum139.php>

http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript_nafisi.html

"Reading Lolita in Tehran " Wikipedia entry:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading_Lolita_in_Tehran

For "I Saw Ramallah", try these book reviews:

<http://198.65.147.194/English/Crisis/BookReviews/article2.SHTML>

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1157677,00.html>

<http://www.arabworldbooks.com/Readers2002/articles/ramallahE.html>

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A Walk Through Local Non-Profits

As you walk down Mission Street in the Excelsior and some other nearby streets, one notes the appearance in recent years of a number of new “entities”, not profit making businesses and generally not city agencies. Many of these institutions are non-profit corporations that perform functions that in other times and circumstances were performed directly by government, by private firms or not at all. They are involved in providing health and elder care, youth services, counseling etc.

While not “public” agencies, these non-profits frequently receive a large portion or all of their funding from public sources, such as contracts with the city, Medicaid, etc. For a variety of reasons, governments at almost all levels have delegated substantial parts of the services they perform to non-governmental non-profits. However, generally speaking these non-profits do not have the same relationship with the public that government does and do not necessarily operate with the openness and public accountability that are at least theoretically required of public agencies.

Few of us in the neighborhood know much about what services are being provided at which storefront and do not feel all that comfortable walking in and asking. There does not appear to be much in the way of local outreach to the general public performed by many of these non-profits, whether because of lack of resources or other reasons. In informal discussions with employees of several of these non-profits it appears a pattern of almost quasi-segregation can emerge. A particular program attracts a very discrete element of the community or even residents of distant parts of the city and is largely ignored by a substantial portion of our wildly diverse Excelsior population who would seem to be eligible for the program and could benefit from it.

Some of the non-profits have websites that we have attempted to catalog on our website: <http://excelsiorsf.org/>. We have telephone numbers for others. Others may be located through the city or other service providers. However, we know that outreach is a major difficulty here. A complication arising from our diversity and the lack of a local media is the near impossibility of readily reaching any broad spectrum of our population. Perhaps pamphlets could be distributed locally in several languages describing what is available. But who would undertake and pay for this? Perhaps the non-profits could attempt more outreach, maybe a joint booth at the Excelsior Festival, or regular appearances at meetings of community organizations? One successful example of this is Balboa High School which regularly sends a representative to EDIA meetings to keep us advised of happenings there.

However it is accomplished, a healthy interaction of the non-profits with the community would likely benefit both. For the community, better awareness of services available. For the non-profits, a broader local constituency which may provide assistance when questions of funding and other issues arise.

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Public Art Seems to be Bursting Out All Over

If you have walked the streets of the Excelsior in recent weeks, you may have had to negotiate the arrays of paint cans and ladders. A number of these arrays herald and facilitate the arrival of at least two new instances of public art on our streets: a now, nearly complete mural on the newly painted facade of the Royal Bakery at 4773 Mission St., and a mural now emerging on the south side of Excelsior above Mission.

The mural above the Royal depicts the Last Supper leavened with generous supplies of bread in various shapes and includes two side panels of pastoral views. The curtains, breads and landscapes are lushly colored and reminiscent of themes found in Italian Renaissance paintings. The mural above the Royal is painted by Mr. Benedicto Brigada who has painted interior murals at Taqueria Guadalajara and North Beach Pizza, nearby on Mission, and murals in other parts of the city as well.

The mural emerging on Excelsior is being done by young people of the neighborhood under a project put together by the EAG and lead by Precita Eyes. Both these welcome additions to the neighborhood seem to perform the functions that public art traditionally does: beautify, inform, stimulate, encourage discussion even controversy, glorify and maybe even promote, among others.

Our thanks to the artists and to Mr. Monroy of the Royal and EAG (Jaime Wong, especially) for their contributions in providing this visual feast to the neighborhood.



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Street Sign Changes Continued from page 3

and the risk of liability that the failure to better alert drivers to radical changes might entail. The many construction projects on our streets this summer have frequently involved flag persons, extensive warning signs and uniformed police officers even though the equipment involved has frequently been massive and highly visible. Most of us probably support these protective measures for the safety of the workers and the vehicle occupants.

When modest sized one-way signs are erected, when vehicles making left turns are unaware that they can no longer rely on stop signs for traffic moving in the opposite direction that have stood for many years, it would seem our frugal officials might have given a little more consideration to safety of vehicle occupants in executing the changes on Craut and Silver.

Book Club Continued from Page 4

For an interview with Mourid Barghouti:

<http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=298>

For Mourid Barghouti's Wikipedia entry:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mourid_Barghouti

Coming Attractions:

For October (date and location TBD) we have selected a Halloween-appropriate non-fiction book: "Stiff" by Mary Roach (2003, 292 pages). "Stiff" is an oddly compelling, often hilarious exploration of the strange lives of our bodies postmortem. For two thousand years, cadavers – some willingly, some unwittingly – have been involved in science's boldest strides and weirdest undertakings. In this fascinating account, Mary Roach visits the good deeds of cadavers over the centuries and tells the engrossing story of our bodies when we are no longer with them.

Don't be shy if you've missed prior meetings ! We are eager to meet you and share in your insights.

Looking forward to seeing you on September 18 !

Patty

Trash into Treasure

Excelsior District Improvement Association (EDIA) and Excelsior Action Group (EAG) are co-presenting an art project for youth at the Excelsior Festival on Sunday, September 23. We will be using recycled materials to bring youth, and anyone else together, to create two large group pieces.

We need your good junk - bottle and jar caps, plastic lids, costume jewelry broken or not, buttons, small toys, toy pieces, clothespins, aluminum can snap off pieces, etc. Basically anything small and not sharp.

We also need magazines - low on text and high on images. And it would be great if you would take the time to tear out any pictures anyone might find demeaning or offensive in some way.

You can bring the items to EAG or EDIA meetings or drop them off at the EAG office at 4702 Mission Street, above Bottoms Up, between 10 am and 5 pm.

Or call Grace D'Anca at (415)748-1416 for pickup and/or for any questions.

What and Where is EDIA?

We are a non-profit neighborhood organization working for civic improvement and the general welfare of our district and the city of San Francisco.

We welcome your comments and submissions for the newsletter and the website. If you have articles, photos or other art work you would like to submit, or comments or suggestions please call R. Katz at (415) 586-6014 or e-mail:

ediasf-info@yahoo.com

Meetings are scheduled for: August 28th and September 24th check the EDIA website for the latest information:

<http://excelsiorsf.org>

EDIA Meeting & Location Information below



Excelsior Festival Fund Raiser

by Paige Nittler

Many of us have come to look forward to the Excelsior Festival each fall. The festival is on September 23rd this year, and it will be the fifth festival for our neighborhood. The Excelsior Festival is a fun family event with musical performances, activities for kids, good food, interesting vendors, and information tables on neighborhood and civic groups. What many people may not know is the work that goes into putting this neighborhood festival together.

The festival is hosted each year by the Excelsior Action Group (eagsf.org). The Excelsior Action Group is a non-profit organization geared around revitalizing the Mission/Geneva Corridor. The festival was conceived as a way to bring the neighborhood together at our commercial core. Outside of all of the work that goes into organizing all of the events of the day, there is also a plethora of effort that goes into fund-raising to insure that the event is largely free.

Funds for the Excelsior Festival come from a few different sources. Grants from the city, donations from local businesses and individuals, and money raised from the sale of vendor tables all help offset the costs of hosting the event. This year the EAG decided to try a new fund-raising event – a concert.

On Friday, August 3rd, Furniture 4 Less located at 4550 Mission Street hosted the first Excelsior Festival Fund-raising Concert. Latin Overdrive, a band that will be playing at the Excelsior Festival this year, played for the concert. Food was generously donated by Sorrento's Italian Deli and Martha Brother's Coffee. Approximately 40 people attended the event, and this crowd was made up of people of all ages. Some of the youngest participants were even wheeled into the event in a little red wagon. With the event being hosted at a furniture store, there was no shortage of seating, and the store owners had even decorated the store with lanterns to add to the festive atmosphere. Participants were in general agreement that Latin Overdrive is very good. Their mix of samba, rock, and Latin beats had listeners anxious to hear more at the festival. It was also fun to have a hopping event on Mission Street in the evening. Passers-by were often curious about what was going on, and one police officer stopped in for a short listen.

All-in-all, the event was a success. \$1,115 was raised to support the festival, and a good time was had by all.

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It is easy to join or renew your EDIA membership. Just fill out and clip this coupon; then enclose it with a check or money order for \$15.00 made out to EDIA

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EXCELSIOR DISTRICT NEWS

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Looking for Mr. Green

As most of you are aware, EDIA is neighborhood non-profit. One might say we are an extreme non-profit. All our activities are based on volunteer efforts. Even our meetings are held in the space generously provided at no charge by a member. We have established a website that is hosted on a member's computer at no charge and maintained by volunteer efforts. We rely almost entirely on membership dues of \$15 per year to cover our modest expenses. Prime among those expenses is the cost of printing and distributing this newsletter.

Many organizations like our own have ceased publishing physical newsletters altogether. You're probably aware of the sad decline of journalism in general over recent years. Local coverage has become almost non-existent. We are attempting to maintain a very modest degree of highly localized coverage. We don't pretend we're able to do much but to a painful degree we are all there is. We could save some money by not printing the newsletter and relying solely on the web. However, many of our members and residents of this neighborhood do not have access to the web and are not sufficiently comfortable using computers, so we persist in this quixotic endeavor.

We need your support. Each physical copy of the newsletter sent to a non-member is done at a loss to us. We have tried to continue providing newsletters to folks who do not join us and do not make any contribution. We will likely have to curtail this if we do not have more of you joining up or otherwise making a modest contribution to the organization.

Upcoming Excelsior Events

Sunday, September 23, 2007 The Fifth Annual Excelsior Festival. Location is Persia and Mission. Now accepting applications for vendors, artists and entertainers. See the website: <http://www.excelsiorfestival.org/home.htm> for more information or call the EAG at 415-585-0110.



EDIA

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PLACE STAMP
HERE