

Market Street saga: Parrots carry the day

Jay and Herb have been at the same newsstand location, just outside the front entrance to 1095 Market St. at Seventh, for more than 20 years. They sell Chronicles and a few other papers. This spring, they started bringing their birds. Noise-making birds: a white cockatoo named Frosty, a blue gull macaw called Harriet and Baby, a raucous gray parrot. Baby likes to whistle at the girls.

Jay and Herb have five birds in all, but usually bring no more than three at a time. They brought birds to work a few years ago when they worked out of the old wooden shack, but you could hardly see them unless you got real close.

Then the city got rid of all the newsies' shacks and replaced

them with French kiosks, so the tourists would think they were visiting Paris. Jay and Herb had to leave the birds home. This pleased neither the birds nor Jay and Herb, but the kiosk's enclosed space was much too small for birds and men. Man, actually. The kiosk was so small only one could fit in at a time.

Over time Jay and Herb adjusted to their new kiosk — they hadn't cared much for it at first. They noticed the kiosk's fan shape created a space in front that is protected from the wind. The corner is very windy. The guys had always worried the birds would catch a chill. The new kiosk changed all that.

Back came the birds, but now everyone could see them. They got a small table and a wooden rack that can accom-

modate up to three birds. They hung some feathers and bells on the rack for the birds to play with.

Right behind the birds came the crowds. I first became aware of the birds because of Baby's piercing wolf whistle. I remember joking with Jay that if he weren't careful some irate tourist husband would try to give him a poke in the eye.

"Better get a sign saying, 'It ain't me, it's the bird,'" I told him. Then I noticed the crowds. Some were clearly tourists, but I quickly noticed several people who worked in offices in the building and the ground floor shops. People standing in a semicircle became a common sight. I decided to write a story when I watched a mother picking up her young son so he could see the macaw at eye-

level. The birds had become a resource.

It was clearly a good story and the Chronicle sent a reporter and photographer. The picture ran in the paper's Aug. 3 Friday section, along with a long caption and an audio segment on the Chronicle Web site. The TV news crews were probably not far behind. August is a very slow news month.

As celebrities are always saying, the trouble with publicity is you never know who is going to read about you and what they may do as a result. Stars are thinking of stalkers. In Jay and Herb's case they were done in by a Chronicle lawyer. On Aug. 9, a union rep dropped by their kiosk with a letter.

"I'm just a message boy," he disclaimed. The letter said Jay

and Herb's birds were a danger to the customers and the Chronicle didn't want the possibility of a lawsuit. The kiosk was back to being birdless and the financial fallout was that Jay and Herb reported reduced sales of the Chronicle.

But never underestimate the power of sentiment. Late in the afternoon of Aug. 14, Paul Hutcheson, who is single copy manager for the Chronicle, dropped by the kiosk and told Jay and Herb they could bring the birds back. Dozens of people had e-mailed the Chronicle, protesting the bird's banishment. The Chron was big enough to change its mind.

The birds are out there as I write this and so is the crowd. Even the sun is shining. ■

Task Force delays demise till September

The Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force held its final full meeting on Aug. 8., but put its plans to officially disband on hold until Sept. 10, when it scheduled a review of the closeout financial report on the three-year, \$1.1 million neighborhood improvement effort.

Co-Chairman David Baker set the tone for the beginning of the end with a list of thank yous:

"We're appreciative of Mercy Charities for providing this space (111 Jones, where the Task Force meets monthly); appreciative for Brad (Paul, the former Task Force staff member). Thanks to TNDC, our fiscal agent.

"And thanks to all of you for participating in the civic culture. Maybe at the end of the day that's what we're all judged by."

The Rev. Glenda Hope

reported on the work of the Futures Committee:

"A bunch of people who really care about carrying on met a week ago and suggested some next steps.

"1. Ask stakeholders what specific tasks they'd be willing to do for up to six months. Come to a September meeting with this written down.

"2. Decide who needs to be invited to this September meeting. Some merchants should be invited. Who are the groups not adequately represented and who will assume responsibility for inviting them?"

"3. Continue with this (the Task Force's) meeting time since it's familiar to everyone.

"At a later time," Hope said, "we might want to go for a small planning grant for a coordinator — \$3,000-\$4,000, something like that."

Kali Grosberg, who headed the Y2K preparedness project for

the neighborhood, said more Southeast Asians should be involved.

"I question whether we have the resources to reach out to these communities," said Craig Adelman of TNDC. "It's not a

ONE LAST GASP
Geoff Link

small task."

"We have to keep trying," Grosberg said, adding that she would call the head of a new group — Wildflower — that is "starting to reach out to Southeast Asian groups and Pacific Islanders."

Philip Nguyen, director of the Southeast Asian Community Council, explained why it's so

hard to get ethnic involvement: "We reach out to them," Nguyen said, "but they don't have the staff to spare for meetings and they say to me, 'You're there, that's enough.'"

"Our efforts should be focused on creating an organizational entity to do what the Task Force has done," Baker said.

"If we can get 2-3 new people at each meeting, we'll be making progress," said Brad Paul.

The meeting of the Futures Committee was set for 10 a.m., Sept. 12, at 111 Jones.

"This allows the Task Force to die," Adelman said. "We can make sure there's a safety net for some of the projects. Then this entity can metamorphose into whatever it's capable of being."

That would have ended the Task Force, but at the previous meeting resident Frederick

Hobson had asked for a final report on the Task Force finances.

"An effort was made to get a financial statement," Baker said. "It's incomplete."

"TNDC will do a draft financial statement," Paul said, and that will be mailed to the members with a request for feedback in writing. Then a meeting will be held to discuss and finalize the numbers and that will be sent to the membership.

"Out of \$1.1 million," Paul said, "only \$2,500 hasn't been allocated."

Hobson moved that the Task Force delay disbanding "until financial statements are prepared and wrapped up."

The motion passed 12 to 0. The meeting to discuss finances was set for 10 a.m., Sept. 10.

"Well, maybe we'll disband one of these years," said Baker as the meeting adjourned. ■

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

Against my better judgment, and the time-honored and sage advice of not engaging in argument or dialogue with crazy people, thieves, or liars, I respond to Central City Extra's scurrilous distortions and half truths put forth in the June-July 2001 edition.

To begin, readers should know that Michael Nulty and his good friend David Baker serve on the editorial board of the Extra. Hence, my assertion that the story was done with intent to politically benefit Mr. Nulty and his very merry little band, and not to impartially or factually tell a story. The article is a tall tale, nothing more. Readers should note, as well, that not one of my colleagues involved in the matter was contacted, even though names and telephone numbers were provided to the "reporters." Only those who were favorable to the Nulty

party were interviewed. It seems that whatever little in the way of journalistic standards Central City Extra might have had, have now fallen through the very wide crack in its publisher's cranium. In future, it would be prudent for the Extra to remember its non-profit status and taxpayer funding, before it dumps partisan character assassination on an innocent, naive, and unknowing public.

As for Chris Daly, the very colorful supervisor we of District 6 are currently burdened with, we wish he had enjoyed himself more. He did, however, stay at the party much too long, right up to the last 20 minutes, when he and his entourage, mercifully, exited. This, of course, did not stop temper-boy from excitedly calling moi at 7:30 a.m. the very next morning, breathlessly salivating as to when he could collect the proceeds from the very successful fundraiser. What a guy!

By all accounts, the other 300 or so guests enjoyed the show. Stay tuned to see who the mischievous Miss Kitty throws out at next year's event.

Regards,
F. Kitty Hobson

Editor replies:

We should have identified Michael Nulty as a member of the *The Extra's* Editorial Advisory Committee, but that fact has been published in the masthead of each issue since No. 1.

The Extra thanks "Miss Kitty" for writing a letter that is printable. His missives are typically like missiles, fairly exploding off the page, smearing his victims with a vindictiveness rarely witnessed in someone attempting to pass as a public figure.

For more on how Hobson ties up public proceedings with his shenanigans, see Page 4.

The Editor



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