TOWER TALK
AROUND SAN FRANCISCO TOWERS

Sugar Caen

James Guthrie produces Tower Talk (TT) under the nom de plum of Sugar Caen. This is a collection of vignettes, anecdotes, efforts at humor, and informational items regarding residents, employees, events, and conditions in and around San Francisco Towers. This publication is published privately and does NOT carry approval of NOR rely upon resources from Towers management. It has no commercial content and is not intended to replace regular Towers' publications. Those wishing to comment or stop receipt may contact Sugarcaen00@gmail.com

Editorial: Annual Meeting

The March issue of Tower Talk is deliberately appearing early. Sugar desires to reinforce the significance for SFT residents of the Wednesday, February 24, annual meeting, and encourages all to attend.

Monthly fees are among items that assuredly will be discussed. This TT article provides pertinent fodder upon which residents can ruminate in advance of the meeting.

Sugar warrants that SFT offers a high level of service. Moreover, we recognize that, in time, operating costs escalate. This is particularly true when activities are employee-intensive and do not easily permit capital substitutions for labor. (Automation reduces labor. E.g., ATM machines.)

However, frankly, at the Towers, we do not seek automation. We like and depend upon the personable people who serve us in the Dining Room, clean our apartments, attend our medical needs, and in other ways enhance our lives.

Consolidating menu choices, self-service food kiosks, reducing weekly maid service, and off-shoring outpatient care could save money.

However, that is not why we all chose to live at the Towers. The Towers' provides a quality of life we want preserved.

Further, we realize fully that SFT is located in an overheated regional economy where labor costs are unusually high and likely to go higher. We know we are going to have to compete with restaurants and hotels for labor and that means, inevitably, paying our people more.

Thus, that residents might be called upon to pay higher monthly fees is not a prime issue.

However, the rate of fee increase is a big issue. Indulge Sugar some complexity "However small a percentage increase, compounding has dramatic effects." For example:

A hypothetical SFT resident paying $5,000 a month now, if subjected to a 3.5% fee increase will pay $175.00 more a month or $2,100 more per year. Routine annual rate increases in the range of 3.5 percent, when extrapolated for a decade, result in monthly payments of $7,000, or $24,000 more per year, up 40% in a decade.

Current Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures suggest quite low annual inflation, less than 2% annually. Food and apparel are up, but fuel is dramatically down.

A 1% or 2% annual increase in fees, consistent with CPI calculations, would impact a hypothetical $5000 per month SFT resident by $50 to $100 a month, or $600 to $1,200 per year. When projected for a decade, increases of this lesser magnitude result in annually fees rising in a decade of between 10% and 20 %. This is substantially less than the 40% increase resulting from 3.5% annual fee raises.

Some SFT residents are financially secure, and possibly impervious to CPI fluctuations or monthly free increases. That is fine. Sugar is no Bernie Sanders.

However, a substantial proportion of SFT residents do not benefit from 3.5% annual income increases. Sugar will bet that annual Social Security, personal pension adjustments, and CD interest rates do not any time soon reach 3.5%. Given today's volatile stock markets, if residents are currently making more than 3.5% on investments, please email Sugar the name of your financial adviser.

Sugar's point is that few residents can withstand repeated 3.5% annual fee increases and maintain their lifestyle.

The issue is how to reduce likely future labor cost increases and maintain current levels of service.

There are ways to do this, and if asked, Sugar would suggest such. These remedies need not provoke labor dissension or disrupt the level of service all of us wish to maintain.

However, Sugar cannot presently discern any Episcopal Senior Community (ESC), strategy for addressing this issue.

Au contraire, ESC management (not SFT management) appears hell bent on heading in an opposite direction.

For example, an affiliation with Presbyterian Home Services has, so far, not been justified, and occupies time and energy of ESC executives

Engaging in litigation with the Episcopal Dioceses over the aforesaid affiliation runs the risk of millions of dollars in legal cost.

Sugar encourages TT readers to contemplate these issues. Below are questions that might be appropriate to pose at the Annual Meeting:

- Specify the benefits of the proposed affiliation with the Presbyterian Community?
- Can you compare possible affiliation legal costs with revenues raised from an annual 3.5% residential fee increase?
- Does ESC have a strategy for modulating future labor cost increases?
- For what future levels of fee increases should SFT residents budget?

Sugar apologizes for the length and is grateful for your attention.

Rating Rothman

Sugar greatly admires John Rothman. His monthly talks are an attendance must and should be continued far into the future. However, Sugar is aware that John is not universally worshipped. Some proclaim him pessimistic and egotistical. Even accepting these charges, overstated in Sugar view, John's explanations of events and issues are timely, valuable, and contribute to our collective ability to make informed judgments regarding important contemporary political issues. John has an almost unparalleled knowledge of U.S. political history, understanding of geopolitical conditions, and awareness of world events (*Only SFT resident Dan Porat is an equal.)*

However, like all of us, even Sugar, John can do better. Too frequently, he reminds his audience that he strives to be objective and unbiased. The clue that he actually leans left comes from his ceaseless proclamations to the contrary.

Also, John pays insufficient attention to the economy and its influence on political issues. Finally, John's analogy of Donald Trump to Elmer Gantry seems a stretch. A more accurate comparison is to William Jennings Bryan. Donald Trump is a populist, a bombastic egomaniacal version of Jimmy Carter, channeling widespread anti-government feelings and citizen anguish about a fast changing world, fraught with uncertainty; a combination of feelings that leaves many alienated.

The following is Sugar's gratuitous rating of Rothman.

Subject	Grade	Comment
Informative	A	Terrific
Entertaining	A	Terrific
Historical Acumen	A	Outstanding
International Acumen	A	Outstanding
Deportment	A	Very polite
Dramatics	A	Olivier-Like
Speaking	A	Stentorian
Objectivity	D Needs Improvement	Proclaims neutrality too often
Prediction Accuracy	Incomplete	Sugar Suspending Judgment
Economic awareness	C	Possibly naive
Electoral Sensitivity	C	Likely miscalculating national mood
"Tude"	D	May suffer from Season Attitudinal Disorder
Cost to SFT	Unknown to Sugar	Worth whatever paid
Overall Grade	A-	Promote to next grade

Humor

An SFT foursome in their 60"s, agreed that they would meet at Hooters because the waitresses were good looking and wore shorts.

Five years later, the buddies agreed on Hooters because service was good and the beer was excellent.

Five years later, they again choose Hooters because there was parking, and it was good value for the money.

At 75, it was agreed that they would meet at Hooters because the restaurant was wheelchair accessible.

At age 80, the friends agreed that they would meet at Hooters because they had never been there before.

SFT Quiz[1]

1906 Quake survivors annually met at?

Palace Garden Court
Ferry Building
Lotta's Fountain
Union Square

Not a Richmond District Theater?

Balboa
Alexandria
Bridge
Clay

John Rothman's High School"

Lowell
Miss Burks
Washington
St Ignatius

Doyle Drive named after?

Military hero
Auto inventor
Hetch Hetchy architect
Former SF mayor

Water Temple location?

Mt Parnassus
China Basin
Municipal Pier
Highway 280

SF Fireboat?

Phoenix
Rose Parks
Lurline
Yerba Buena

Union Square Restaurant?

Golden Pheasant
Tad's Steakhouse
El Prado
Campton Place

[1] Four correct answers earn an "Attaboy" or "Attagirl" from Sugar. Five correct answers get a TT shoutout. Six correct answers get a TT-mention and earn a truffle or two. Get all-correct and get TT mention and a bottle of wine. (NO using Google) Submit answers to Sugar

Sugar's Micro Rants

Twelfth floor flags, maybe, sometime, never?

Why Golden State Warriors? It is Sacramento Kings, Los Angeles Clippers, and Los Angeles Lakers. It should be San Francisco Warriors (temporarily on loan to Oakland). Team Jersey's even have a cable car.

Informational Item

April issue will feature items such as:

An explanation of how to use and an appraisal of personal ride service UBER.

Information regarding SFT centenarians.

A celebration that NFL football season is finally over.

Electoral comments

Stay Sweet

Sugar