

Review and Preview

August was not as dull as *Tower Talk* predicted. There were five regrettable deaths of our SFT resident friends, and August had more SFT resident birthdays than any other month.

World or civic events deserving of comment in *Tower Talk* include the Olympics, the shocking planning failure of the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, ongoing recall efforts of California’s governor and various San Francisco public officials, and an essay about our neighborhood’s “good, bad, and ugly.” In addition, Hella Cheitlin offers a heart-warming vignette illustrating the power of serendipity in our lives. Finally, Austin and Van Ness are, of course, bickering, but Van explains “Project 93,” and if you do not know of this rightwing fantasy strategy, you just might be interested in reading about it in *Entrez Nous*.

Gubernatorial Recall

September 14 is Special Election Day. Most *Tower Talk* readers interested in this issue will already have received and likely will have completed and returned a ballot. Recent polling suggests Newsom’s recall will be tightly contested. His support resides in the San Francisco Bay and Los Angeles County areas. Outside of these population centers, he is not viewed favorably. If he is removed from office, his successor, one of the dozens of individuals listed on the back of the ballot, is unlikely to come close to getting as many votes as Newsom did when he was elected to office in 2020. The special election is said to cost \$276 million. Newsom does not appear to be on a trajectory to be one of California’s historically great governors. However, it is difficult to know what he is done so poorly to justify his being recalled in midterm. For his opponents, even if the recall fails, this recall attempt surely will jeopardize Newsom’s national aspirations.

Local Recall

One movement against District Attorney Chesa Boudin failed to gain sufficient signatures. A second petition still has a month to acquire



adequate signatures. As an interesting aside, disgraced New York State Governor, Andrew Cuomo, upon leaving office, granted clemency to Boudin’s father, David Gilber, for robbery of an armored car and reduced his 75-year sentence to the 40 years already served.

The recall attempt of three SFUSD school board members has two months remaining to gather sufficient signatures. It appears unusually well organized. SFT residents registered to vote should already have received a petition for each of the three targeted office holders. Their irresponsible actions and reckless disregard for the welfare of school children justify their immediate removal from office.

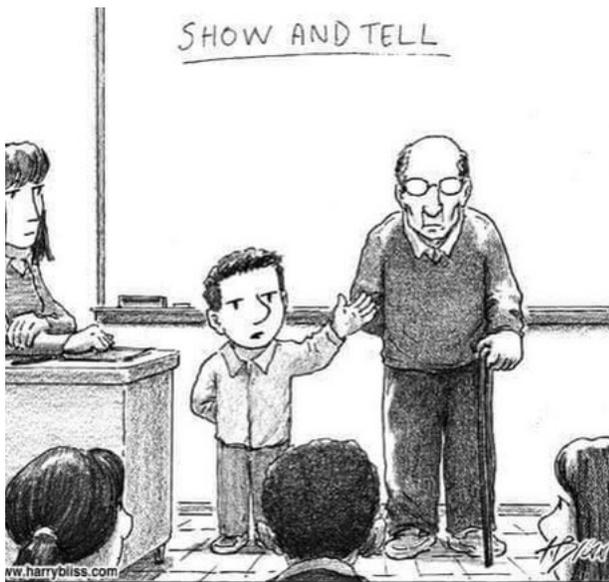
The 2021 Olympics

James W. Guthrie

The two-week event, postponed for a year because of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, was made for TV, not for families and fans. In a randomly selected NBC coverage hour, commercials occupied

23 minutes of viewing time. The heavy onslaught of commercials might explain why viewership was down more than 40% over five years ago with the Rio Olympics. For athletes, it probably was difficult not having relatives and friends present who had supported them throughout all their training. As a nation, the United States bested China when it came to overall medals. Women's track and field alone accounted for more gold medals than most other nations.

For those of us watching on television, the empty seats in stadia and performance sites seemed just plain strange. There were some marvelous athletes and some eye-opening competitive events. Whoever thought skateboarding was a sport requiring extraordinary athletic skills. Now we know. Too bad lesser-known events like rowing, archery, dressage, sailing, and the women's decathlon received little attention when they require so much individual and team skill and effort.



This is my grandpa. He's going to explain why this country is going to hell in a handbasket."

Our women's teams distinguished themselves. Women's gymnastics, volleyball, swimming, track and field, and basketball were superb. Youthful Molly Seidel from Wisconsin, who previously had run only two marathon races in her life, overcame high temperatures and strength sapping humidity and received a bronze medal in that event.

Regrettably, our women's bronze medal soccer team had an off-putting contingent of whiners who publicly proclaimed they were embarrassed to represent the United States. How do you think they would be treated if they were from China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea?

U.S. men did well in basketball, volleyball, swimming, and various individual sports. Our men's track and field team, which should be the best the world, was an embarrassment. Their overall management of events, matching of athletes to races, and coaching was so bad that a former multi-gold medal superstar, Carl Lewis, was moved to speak publicly, calling our men's track and field efforts clownish. Track and field teams from Norway and Italy excelled in events where the U.S. should have dominated. The U.S. 400-meter hurdler performed magnificently, setting a world record only, sadly, to come in second to a Norwegian who ran at an even faster world record pace.

The entire spectacle calls into question whether the Olympics should move every four years from one international venue to another. These efforts are extraordinarily costly for host nations and may be draining resources to support circuses that might better be spent for services. For example, Japan spent more than \$3 billion on Olympic venue construction. Might it not just be better every four years to hold the Olympics in Athens and honor history as much as the present. *Just sayin!* The next summer Olympics are to be held in 2024 in Paris. Maybe we could move back to Athens after that?

From Blue to Khaki

Hella Cheitlin

Sometimes life does not go exactly as planned, and the change might not be all bad.

It was Mel's last year at Temple University Medical School. He said, "Hella, I have to make a decision about an internship. So far, I just can't seem to find the right fit: excellent academics and enough money so you can stop having to support us." Mel had been looking for hospitals that combined a

decent stipend with excellence in teaching. The large, major, famous medical centers that offered much sought-after internships, were reputed to have the best professors and opportunities to learn, but they not only didn't pay the interns, but the interns paid the institution \$10 per month for laundry. Some schools did not even allow their interns to be married.

One of Mel's professors at Temple was a proud Navy man. He recommended that Mel consider an internship in the Navy, an opportunity to receive good training and an officer's pay. (I was pleased about this idea since I always liked Mel in blue.) Mel visited the Naval Hospital in Philadelphia and liked it. But then his newly acquired Navy officer advisor suggested, "Before you make that decision, why don't you look at the Bethesda Naval Hospital near Washington D.C. The hospital there is the Navy's very best teaching facility and Washington is an exciting place to live." Mel and I gathered up our spare pennies and bought train tickets to Washington. After all, we thought, that is not too far from Philadelphia.

We left North Philadelphia station on a cold, cloudy December morning. The clickety-clack and rocking of the train had just started, when snow flurries began to fall. By the time we pulled into Washington's Union Station, 2 inches of snow covered the ground – a virtual blizzard according to local news (which would have given someone in North Dakota a big giggle.) In the station's vast waiting hall, we approached a Traveler's Aide lady for directions to Bethesda Naval Hospital. She laughed and said, "You can't get there! Because of heavy snow, buses aren't running. However, if you are interested in military hospitals you can get to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The trolley tracks have been cleared and you can get there." That is how Mel got to spend 20 years, not in blue, but in khaki!

Our Neighborhood's Good, Bad, and Ugly

James W. Guthrie

Good: In the past year, I have had numerous disappointing encounters with local physicians. Some have been unjustifiably tardy for appointments;

others over-prescribed drugs, made inaccurate diagnoses, and several were disrespectful of patients. Thus, it was with some trepidation that I accepted the generosity of an SFT friend who introduced me to his long-standing cardiologist. And, what a great relief and fulfilling experience it turned out to be. For the moment, this physician will remain anonymous. However, I will silently sing his praise to high heaven.

Finding him among the rabbit warrens and Pavlovian mazes comprising his office medical complex took about 10 minutes. I joked later with my SFT friend that anyone surmounting this Rubik's cube locational puzzle was simultaneously eligible for admission to Stanford and Harvard.

My new doctor was worth the geographic challenge. He was an old-fashioned doctor. He spent two hours with me extracting my health and family history and then he physically examined me. We talked about many things and found that we had much in common, particularly our families and views about modern life. At the end of it all, he gave me a reasonably good bill of heart health, and for that I was grateful.

The entire experience was a memorable step back into yesteryear. Frankly, his waiting room, his receptionist's office, and his own office and examination room were something out of a Victorian novel. The receptionist was in a cramped alcove by herself and invisible. Only by walking into the room and loudly saying "Hello," did she somehow magically appear.

Then, after filling out a few forms, I went down the hall to his patient waiting room. The small, crowded space had file boxes occupying much of the floor and no two chairs that matched. When the physician came to greet me, he said "Why don't we talk in here, my office is a tad crowded." Later, I was personally able to confirm his description. By comparison, his combined office and examination room rendered the receptionist's area and patient waiting room spartan or Amish minimalist.

During our preliminary conversation, his cell phone rang constantly, his receptionist/secretary

came in and asked many questions, he stood up from his chair and looked for pieces of paper and rifled through file boxes repeatedly. Then, somehow, miraculously, when he was finished with whatever interruption had occurred, he resumed the conversation exactly where we left off before he was distracted. He would even return to my last spoken word.

Never once did I have the sense that I was subordinate to whatever else he was doing, it was just that it was necessary for him to do it.

Eventually we went into his examination room. It was literally strewn with files from one side the other. I think the furniture could have been acquired from auctions at 1920 brothels and Greyhound bus depot surplus sales. When I sat across from him at his office desk, he was behind such a stack of patient files, research journals, pharmaceutical advertisements, and directories that all I could see was his white hair. Yet, somehow, he seemed to know where everything was.

However strewn and higgledy piggledy his office complex might have been, he personally was quite neat and nicely dressed.

When examination time came, he set up the EKG monitor and personally placed multiple electrodes; no one assisted him. It probably was one of the most thorough physical examinations I have ever had. Even though it was interrupted every five minutes by yet another phone call, another head popping into his office, or some other kind of high-need activity.

Repeatedly, he instructed patients to phone his personal number that evening or over the weekend when he was less busy. (How many times have you ever heard a doctor say that?)

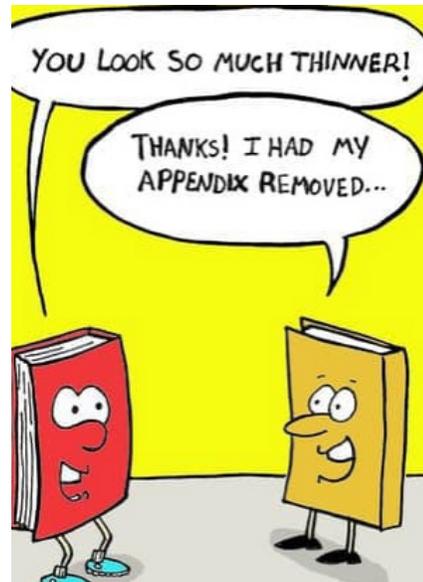
This genuinely compassionate, technically expert, and utterly professional gentleman made all the above eye-opening, jaw dropping, unexpected conditions more than tolerable. His manner made the experience indelibly etched pleasant, memorable, and worthwhile.

As I was about to depart, he stopped me for a second, reached into his shirt breast pocket took

out a personal card and said, "Here's how to reach me when the office isn't open."

Really!!!

More Local Good: The website through which SFT residents can now see daily menus, program activities, and make maintenance and medical ride requests is terrific. Thank you, Patricia Willets, Peter Hertzmann, and Jennifer Hamilton.



Bad: Liquor dealer Bevmo, two blocks south of SFT on Van Ness Avenue, has been engulfed by some other remote and faceless conglomerate. In addition to wines and spirits, new management has substantially expanded food items and bar accoutrements.

I visited in person on a Saturday in preparation for an upcoming celebratory event. I placed my order and carefully arranged to have it delivered to my apartment. I am no longer eager to carry a case of wine on my shoulder for the several blocks home. Hence, I paid a \$10 fee to have my order delivered.

About two hours later, the delivery arrived. SFT security called me down to the lobby to verify my identification. I was flattered but perplexed. (Does Bevmo really think a delivery to a senior center will involve someone under age 21.) No sooner did I see the delivery person with a small box, I knew this was not my order. I informed him that a mistake had been made and that I was

not going to accept that which he brought. He was nonchalant about it and said, "I'm sorry there's a mistake. I'll see what can be done."

Two hours later another delivery arrived. This also was wrong. I decided to walk down to Bevmo and personally straighten things out. I found someone who claimed to be an assistant manager. He said that both orders were correct, and I was wrong. So, I retrieved my receipts and proved my case. He apologized. He said, "I'll see that these are delivered." I said, "No. I'll get them home myself. You can just refund my \$10 delivery fee." (I'm remembering the days when Bevmo delivered to the Towers for free.)

Mr. Assistant Manager said, "I can't do that. New management permits no refunds." I thought to myself apparently new management doesn't permit good service either.

I eventually got what I wanted by doing it myself. However, I would suggest fellow SFT residents frequent the wine shops and liquor stores on Polk Street and elsewhere in our neighborhood.

Bevmo 's prices aren't all that good anyway.

Ugly: What is with the "Noir" at 1425 Franklin Street, across from SFT? The entire structure looks absurd. The bottom one or two floors resemble a cheap saloon in a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western. On top of this already odd structure someone has placed a six-story black cube that seemingly is unrelated to anything upon which it stands or anything else in the neighborhood.

The entire project is off kilter. Realtors were trumpeting its virtues and arranging tours in June. All that came to an unexplained halt. Somehow marketers had gotten ahead of the construction team. At this writing it is not clear what is going to happen with the structure, but recent marketing videos specify the asking price for condos \$3+ million. I recommend demolition.

Entrez Nous

Austin and Van Ness reside in SFT 1501. They are having their morning coffee and discussing national politics. Let's listen.

Aus: Isn't it great having presidential stability?

Van: Huh! I never thought anyone could be worse than Jimmy Carter, but Biden is on course to displace him as the worst modern President. I think incompetence, or at best, Presidential somnolence might possibly be more accurate descriptors than "stability."

Aus: Biden is doing a terrific job; he got an infrastructure bill through Congress.

Van: Yep! He added nicely to the \$29 trillion federal deficit just in time to fuel inflation even more. And he pulled out of Afghanistan in the worst imaginable way. Good work, Joe!

Aus: You are so prejudiced regarding Biden. Give him a chance!

Van: His chance is up. He has assembled a Cabinet team of idiots. With Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, we now have *Winken, Blinken, and Nod*. Just what we need.

Aus: What do you think is going to happen three years from now when Biden's first term is up?

Van: Interesting question. Your assumption is that Biden will live that long. There is a good chance that Kamala Harris will be President by then.

Aus: We'll see. But Biden is holding up well so far.

Van: Who knows how he's holding up. We are almost back where we were a century ago when Woodrow Wilson 's wife, Edith, was running the nation, and very few knew about it.

Aus: Do you think Jill Biden is running the country?

Van: No. That's even funny. I do not think Jill Biden is running anything. She is on a trajectory to become the least distinguished first lady in a century. However, numerous nameless and faceless liberal White House aides are happy to tell Biden when to read his teleprompter and when to sign his name.

Aus: So!! smarty-pants, what do you think the Republicans have in store for us? I hope it is not bringing back Trump, the extraterrestrial.

Van: Barring a catastrophe, Vice President Harris

assuredly will emerge as the Democratic candidate. If party elders are smart, they will reinforce her with someone capable such as Amy Klobuchar or Peter Buttigieg. We'll have to see about all of that.

Aus: But I am asking what's going to happen on the Republican side?

Van: Plenty of candidates are already getting ready for the race. The leader now is South Carolina Senator Tim Scott. Big money is flowing to him. Since he is black, he will have to have a running mate who's something not black. That could be Nikki Haley who is the former governor of South Carolina and very smart. But two other ambitious candidates are on the horizon. One is Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton, and the other is Florida's Governor DeSantis. The Republican side will be interesting.

Aus: Do you count Donald Trump out?

Van: That, too, is interesting. Do you know of "Project 93?"

Aus: Inform me "Oh, Mighty One."

Van: Don't get nasty. Remember our couples' training for which we paid an arm and a leg.

Aus: I'm sorry. Please go on.

Van: This is crazy! Stick with me. I'll try to explain it. It all starts with Trump running for Congress from a safe seat in Florida. Once elected, or so the phantasy goes, he is part of what is hoped to be a red wave that captures Congress by a large margin. Trump is elevated by his new colleagues to be speaker of the House. Biden is declared incapable of governing by a panel of physicians. He is removed from office, and Kamala becomes the 47th President. The new House majority brings impeachment charges against Kamala. A new Republican Senate super majority quickly convicts her. Trump, as Speaker, now assumes the Presidency.

Aus: So, what's with the "Project 93" stuff? Will the Supreme Court let this happen?

Van: Trump was President "45." Now he becomes President "48." They total "93." As for Supreme Court approval, Trump took care of that two years ago.

Aus: How bizarre. Your favorite, BLT's, is on the lunch menu.

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