

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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Rain. ROARSHOCK PAGE comes to you from San Francisco with a deep knowledge and old understanding of Northern California. There are two seasons: the rainy and the dry. Dry and wet years. Winter 2017 has been the wettest in a great many years and newcomers around here are freaking out, plus so much more live video and periscopes than ever before. It will dry out again. So dry. Let the water replenish our thirsty aquifers. May the Sierra snow last until July. Fill the rain barrels and leave them full.

YEAR OF THE FIRE ROOSTER

San Francisco rises like a jeweled pinnacle of the western frontier. Out in a linear line from the philosophy of the Greeks, the conquests of the Romans, the mathematics of the Moors, and the science of The Enlightenment. Always moving west, the outliers of culture bringing the past through the present into the future, piled up along the shore of the Pacific Coast of America, and there were met and mingled with even more ancient rhythms and traditions of the Far East. When I was young, just starting my free compulsory public education, that and generally accepted common sense taught that we people were at a particular point on the straight line of history (the present) which had progressed since 1492 when Columbus sailed the ocean blue and Discovered America. The line of history trended upward and when I was a boy, NASA regularly launched astronauts into space culminating with men walking on the moon. Even though graphs easily showed the forward direction of progress and how it was advanced by those who applied hard work with a nose against the grindstone mentality, it was also an unalterable fact that the grindstone was a wheel. A linear and literal worldview must still take into account the phases of the moon, the turning of the tides, and the seemingly endless turning around of the seasons. By the 21st century advances in science and precision instruments with which to observe and measure natural phenomenon had clearly shown how cyclic movement extended beyond the earth into the solar system and on ever grander scales to galaxies swirling through the universe. Chinese New Year cycles with the seasons and through the eons and eras, rather than plotting along on a straight and narrow march of progress. The United States and the first European settlement that became the City and County of San Francisco were both

founded in 1776. Baby time when compared to the ancient and antique histories of China and other lands of the Orient. The Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, occurs at the dark of the new moon near midpoint between winter solstice and spring equinox. Each Chinese New Year turns the twelve spoked wheel of an animal zodiac, being at the time of this writing in the Year of the Rooster. Traditionally Chinese years are numbered from the mythical reign of the Yellow Emperor, but when that supposedly occurred is a subject of scholarly debate, so this new year of the Fire Rooster is either 4715 or 4714, or perhaps 4654. In San Francisco the anticipation builds and preparations are made in the days leading up to New Year's Eve. The streets around Chinatown become even more crowded that usual with merchants moving out beyond storefronts onto the sidewalks and into Stockton Street. Mandarin oranges piled high on tables next to trays of red envelopes, lanterns and other decorations. The New Year is greeted with millions of exploding firecrackers, lion dancers on the streets, and little boys and old men wearing traditional silk suits. Families and friends gather for visits inevitably ending with half hour leave-taking in their apartment building hallways, and yes Grandma has a glass or a few extra of plum wine. The celebrations and observations continue for two weeks concluding when the moon gets full with a nighttime parade. I love San Francisco's Saint Patrick's Day Parade and the Pride Parade and most especially the spectator participant Saint Stupid's Day Parade each April 1, but nothing compares to the spectacle of the Chinese New Year's Parade. It takes hours for all the groups to walk the route beginning on Market Street and winding around Union Square, then along Kearny Street on the edge of Chinatown all the way to Pacific Avenue on the old Barbary Coast. A local joke says that it always rains the night of the parade, but my experience has been rain at maybe half the many parades I have attended. Some years included a bit of both, a little rain and also some clear weather. I remember one of my first parades early in residence in San Francisco. N. Nighthawk, my wife at that time, and our daughter B. Rosie-Toes were being visited by our friend Sputnik (who BR-T called "Spectek." He was a small satellite of a man who always had his finger on the pulse of cultural zeitgeist, but sadly after a short meteoric life his own pulse stopped, a great many years ago, and left a huge hole in his friends' reality and the wider world's reality). That parade night we four departed the

little studio in the Ardmore Apartments and walked up Clay Street to the summit of Nob Hill at Jones Street, then down the hill in the gathering dark towards the approaching din in Chinatown. That was a mixed weather year with just a few big rain drops punctuating the exploding firecrackers around us as we watched from Clay at Portsmouth Square, laughing and shouting at the entertainment and symbolism. Over the years I attended so many parades and at different places along the route, both alone and with friends, and also with The Great Fishbini watching BR-T and our young daughter Lil' EB whenever they marched in the parade with the contingent of whichever school they were attending that year. Occasionally I watched the parade from the start of the route along Market Street at 2nd Street, but more often near the end on Kearny Street at Pacific Avenue. One year when it poured rain we waited and waited for BR-T's school to go by which at last they did and we spotted her. She was soaked through the clear plastic poncho to the costume underneath and she looked bedraggled and miserable. On one clear night parade when Lil' EB's school was marching, her grandparents were watching on television at the Top of the Hill and recorded the parade catching a quick clear image of Lil' EB's beautiful smile as she marched. The Great Fishbini and I arrived early enough one year to grab a spot on the rail at the end of the parade route, and we watched the spectacle along Kearny Street, the dragons and lions and the awesome immortals scarily lumbering along towards us in smoke with gongs and drums. This year the conclusion of the New Year celebrations found me alone as I approached the crackling energy. The parade was already underway and it was too crowded to view from the end at Kearny and Pacific Avenue, so I made my way along the west side of Kearny behind the grand viewing stand to Portsmouth Square where I found a patch of sidewalk with only a couple of rows of short people lining the street, so that's where I stood for the next couple of hours watching it all go by. My children long grown and graduated from SFUSD, I none the less cheered each school as they went by and enjoyed the marching bands from far and wide and all the floats of Chinese splendor. All the while fireworks exploding everywhere and I thought it must be nerve wracking for the police. The officers lining the route looked nonchalant. As the parade drew to a close I walked through the crowd to California Street to walk up over the hill back home thinking about ROARSHOCK PAGE and that a few more California Street Sketches were due to be written this year (featuring an alter-ego, A..A... and other alter-egos) and maybe again some editions of just simple verse. Of course there always remained the possibility of guest contributors (rumors had it that Anon of Ibid was still lurking about). In this Year of the Fire Rooster: the fixed element of metal, ideally industrious and philosophical, existing in an urgent time with so much remaining to be done.

— D. A. Wilson

FEBRUARY ALMANAC

- 02/01 1964 The Beatles first number one hit in the US: "I Want to Hold Your Hand."
 02/02 1887 First Groundhog Day was observed in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.
 2017 GROUNDHOG DAY
 02/04 1789 George Washington unanimously elected as the first President of the United States by the U.S. Electoral College.
 02/05 2017 JTEL'S DAY
 02/06 1917 Zsa Zsa Gabor was born in Budapest.
 02/10 2017 FULL SNOW MOON
 02/11 -660 Traditional date for foundation of Japan by Emperor Jimmu.
 02/14 2017 VALENTINE'S DAY
 02/15 2003 Protests against the US war on Iraq took place in over 600 cities worldwide.
 02/19 356 Emperor Constantius II issued a decree to order the closing of all the pagan temples within the Roman Empire.
 02/21 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*.
 1925 *The New Yorker* published its first issue.
 1937 League of Nations banned foreign national "volunteers" in the Spanish Civil War.
 2017 Ray Amir, Pinel School co-founder, died at home in Berkeley, California.
 02/22 2017 Terra Dunlap and Joe Burke were married by the Rev. Roberts in San Francisco.
 02/26 2017 NEW MOON
 02/28 1939 The erroneous word "dord" discovered in Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, prompted investigation.

<http://roarshock.net/february.html>

Calling for Contributions! ROARSHOCK PAGE invites submissions of art, photographs, poetry, and micro-prose, to be considered for inclusion in future issues.

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Roarshock

North Beach Station

P.O. Box 330108

San Francisco, CA 94133-0108

roarshock@aol.com

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