

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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Volume 9, Number 1

San Francisco

January 3, 2016

Greetings at the start of 2016. An even year, a Leap Year, a year for another United States Presidential Election debacle. Ever contemplating in the amazing tradition of that Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de La Mancha, ROARSHOCK PAGE goes forth in support of Art and Poetry, ready to battle all boorish monsters and the windmills of time.

CALIFORNIA STREET SKETCHES NEW YEAR'S DAY

A..A... emerged at the top of steps strewn with confetti, cups, and other curious detritus, out into the dark, at the hour of the wolf, on New Year's morning, only muffled street lights illuminating the scene. These steps the literal easternmost entrance that opened to Embarcadero Station of the BART/Muni-Metro subway. He had just disembarked the last BART train back through the Transbay Tube on that night of extended holiday service. That final late train was roaring away now under Market Street heading towards Mission and out to Daly City. A..A... stood there now on the pavement at the foot of California Street where it met Market Street and both rolled out across the Embarcadero toward the Ferry Building, as had been the case since 1898. Prior even to that, this had been the Bay gateway to San Francisco since before the Gold Rush, by ship and boat, by bus, car and truck after the Bay Bridge was built just south of the Ferry Building, and from the last part of the 20th century onwards the amazing marvel of the BART Transbay Tube tunnel hurtling passengers below water back and forth between Oakland and the City.

At this, an unearthly hour even following New Year's Eve, A..A... looked about at the aftermath of mighty revelry that had gone down here hours before, yet the celebrants all were gone. Yet he knew they had been there, and could almost hear the echoing memory of their recent din, on this, greatest of all amateur drinking nights — The whoops and cheers that had rung out here hours before. Guys decked out in formal wear wrinkled with the night's excess, and pretty girls in itty bitty party dresses ill-suited for outdoors on December 31, even in Northern California, goose bumps and pert little nipples accentuating their cute flushed beauty. All those folks had struggled through singing *Auld Lang Syne*, laughed, cried, kissed, drank, and some, no doubt, had stumbled and puked, but now they had all gone home to sleep it off. They would awake again in the New Year. A..A... was

incredibly all alone there at the east end of California Street, eastern terminus of the California Street Cable Car line. There was no sound of the cable running beneath the street, it had been shut down, and it would be a while yet before the cable cars resumed service up and down the hill. North along the side of Drumm Street next to the Hyatt Hotel there were no taxis waiting for fares. Absolutely nobody else was about and there was nothing for A..A... to do but walk along California Street. He was returning home after New Year's Eve in Oakland where he had partied with old acquaintances at a concert of remnants of the Grateful Dead — Even as they had done with the legendary and venerable old band itself back in the heyday. The night had been poignant, full of tradition and reverence, and marking the cycling of the seasons. Of course, it would never again be how it had been when Bill Graham and Jerry Garcia were alive.

A..A... could feel the late night chill in his bones, but was still sharp from the evening's excitement and all the party favors he had enjoyed, picking his way through discarded bottles and noisemakers, he decided to walk along the sidewalk at the north side of the street which tended to be his custom. Across from him spotlights illuminated holiday decorations and the model ziggurats in the plaza before 101 California Street. He walked passed the dark façade of Tadich Grill and continued to stroll those easy blocks through the Financial District.

After Kearny Street the slope really began to climb and he became thoroughly immersed in the concentration and exertion of walking up the California Street Hill. What a fitting way to begin a New Year, he smiled to himself and gulped big breaths of cold night air. A true iconic scene of San Francisco and the Golden State, at whatever point in history, the view looking either down, or up, the California Street Hill, A..A... reflected how the romance of those images, so easily recalled to mind, differed from the reality of the steep and difficult climb up the streets to the heights on Nob Hill. Eyes focused on the concrete sidewalk squares as they passed beneath him, the deep regular rhythm of his breathing and the aching pressure in his legs as he passed Old Saint Mary's Cathedral, Grant Avenue and Chinatown, and climbed to Powell Street where the California line crossed the Powell, Hyde and Mason Street cable car lines. He stopped at Mason Street, at the top of the slope, breathing hard, and looked back down the way he had climbed. Far down below the end of the cable car line and the eastern most BART/Muni-Metro tunnel from which he had exited into the night. As always he noted the majesty of the Southern

Pacific Building on the south side of Market and the Ferry Building with its tower against the backdrop of the bay, Yerba Buena Island, the Bay Bridge with Oakland across the bay. Turning away from the view he continued west between the Mark Hopkins and the Fairmont Hotels. No cabs were waiting here either. He crossed the level top of Nob Hill where a century before mansions had stood. Only one had survived the great earthquake and fire in 1906, now it was an exclusive private men's club. At Jones Street the hill dropped away steeply on the south to the Tenderloin. In the north Jones climbed to the heights of Nob Hill. A..A... reflected back on that recent New Year's Eve, standing with fellow San Franciscans at the corner of Clay and Jones while the clock in Grace Cathedral chimed 12 times, as the calendar turned over from 1999 to 2000. Everybody had relaxed by then from fear that computer networks and the defense and power grids would suddenly shut down, as had been widely hyped beforehand, with the advent of Y2K. It was still a solemn moment with the sounds of cheering and fireworks exploding coming up from along the Embarcadero even as the Cathedral bells vibrated out above. There were many hugs and shaking of hands as neighbors congratulated each other on being citizens together, bridging millennium in a Great City of the World and the Universe.

Now the New Years proceed each in its turn as the 21st century rolled along.

A..A... looked up and around at the vast dark sky. Still no hint of dawn out beyond the East Bay hills. From Jones the west side of Nob Hill, lined on both sides by stately apartment houses, dropped down steeply into Polk Gulch. At Hyde Street the feeder line for the California Street line veered away north up Hyde in route to the Cable Car barn. There were three bars on California above Hyde. One was in a curious location a good way up the steep block on the south side. A..A... smiled to himself as he looked at the dark bar from across the street. He did what he could to conduct himself well when in public, especially when drinking, and this was the only bar he had ever received the dreaded 86 from. This was one warm afternoon, the only time he had gone in there, and in the company of two guys named M-Rod and OD. He always suspected that he was just being included when the barmaid kicked them out. After all, no one could say that he had a weird name. Now across Hyde and on the south side the seemingly forever beacon of the lights from Cala Foods, though he couldn't actually see anybody inside. Another block, and across the street the non-descript Cable Car Court, and the funny sign for the Cut-Up barber shop. Had he continued down the block he would have passed the Lumiere Theatre and Cordon Bleu Vietnamese restaurant, and across the next corner the California Tobacco Center which had formerly been the Paperback Traffic bookstore, but he turned right onto Larkin Street, for A..A... this California Street New Year's Day walk was almost over, as his apartment was just a block away. He would be home before daylight.

— D. A. Wilson

JANUARY ALMANAC

01/01	1899	End of Spanish rule in Cuba.
	2016	NEW YEAR'S DAY
01/02	1900	'Open Door Policy' to promote U.S.-China trade announced by John Hay.
01/03	1892	J. R. R. Tolkien born in Bloemfontein, Orange Free State.
01/04	1334	Amadeus VI, Count of Savoy was born.
01/06	1946	Syd Barrett born in Cambridge, England.
01/08	871	Alfred the Great led a West Saxon army to repel an invasion by Danelaw Vikings.
01/09	2014	American poet Amiri Baraka died.
01/10	2016	NEW MOON
01/14	1967	The Human Be-In occurred at the Polo Field, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.
01/15	1943	The Pentagon was dedicated in Arlington.
	1967	The first Super Bowl was played in LA.
01/18	1911	Eugene B. Ely landed on deck of the USS Pennsylvania stationed in San Francisco Bay, the first aircraft landing on a ship.
01/19	2008	John Stewart of The Kingston Trio died.
01/20	250	Pope Fabian was martyred in Emperor Decius' Christian persecutions in Rome.
	1920	American Civil Liberties Union founded.
01/21	1977	U.S. President Jimmy Carter pardoned nearly all Vietnam War draft evaders.
01/24	2016	FULL WOLF MOON
01/27	1942	Singer-songwriter Kate Wolf was born.
01/28	1754	Serendipity coined as a word by Horace Walpole in a letter to Horace Mann.
01/31	1862	Alvan Graham Clark discovered white dwarf star Sirius B, companion of Sirius.

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

ROARSHOCK PAGE, Volume 9, Number 2 will be available February 29, 2016.

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www.roarshock.net

Published by:

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