

# THE OLIVE PRESS

BY RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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## Welcome 2022

I hesitate to tell you, but we are all in a funk; the Omicron wave will soon be upon us. Where will we get the stamina, creativity, and foresight to deal successfully with this wily new variant which is apparently four times more transmittable than Delta?

That's not to say that we don't know what to do or haven't planned, or bought more supplies. We do. We have. We did. It's that the holiday we had hoped for isn't coming anytime soon. Why did we even try to predict an unrealistic future? Why? We deeply want and need a vacation.

But,

“The future is not about prediction but about shaping the future with agile experimentation on what works and what does not work\*”

This is true. We can look back over the past two years, now, as experienced assisted living staff, and can list what we learned and apply it to a not-completely-new situation. We will need agile experimentation to figure out how the transmissibility of the virus will affect our current plans and to innovate, as needed.

So welcome to 2022. Not the vacation we so wanted, but not the end of the world either.

\* <http://blog.business-model-innovation.com/2014/11/missing-part-for-business-model-innovation-the-process/>

# Resident of the Month—Jane Cutler



“Isn’t innovation a lot like creativity?” asked Jane Cutler, RGP resident and retired writer, editor, and teacher of children and short-story writing. “Thinking differently is part of being a writer. We are born thinking differently.

I haven’t written completely conventional books for children but I’ve explored war, social justice, and race relations as well as friendship and family,” she explained. “I have written two books explicitly about war: *The Cello of Mr. O*, a picture book, and *My Wartime Summers*, a novel about WW II. My intention was, of course, to tell a story, to create compelling characters, conflict, resolution—as always—but also to have kids think about war itself without feeling endangered.

Researching and writing books, I ended up in fortuitous and unforeseen situations!

Writing *The Song of the Molimo* (1998) became such an experience. I had come across a true story about Ota Benga, a Congolese Pygmy who was rescued from a slave market in Africa by an anthropologist working for the St. Louis 1904 World’s Fair. Ota Benga and four other Congolese Pygmies elected to travel back to

St. Louis with him, where they were exhibited in a “human zoo,” part of the Anthropology Exhibit at the Fair. Reading about this, I decided to explore the racism of that time. I did it through the eyes of a fictitious character, twelve-year-old Harry, who in the book, becomes acquainted with the Pygmy and, following the lead of an enlightened older cousin, begins to question prevalent beliefs. I did five years of research for this book and, at one point, went to Lynchburg, Virginia, looking for information about Chauncy Spencer, who when he was a boy, had known Ota Benga. Mr. Spencer was, by the way, one of the Tuskegee Airmen, and his mother was the Harlem Renaissance poet Anne Spencer, who tutored Ota Benga. I knew that Ota Benga had interacted with Chauncy and his childhood friends, but I did not know that Chauncy was still alive. I traveled to a Lynchburg private library where the librarian had promised to help me with my research. But he was completely unprepared.

Hearing the dismay in my voice, a local woman walking by said “Why don’t you just call him up?”

“How can I get his number?” I asked.

“Try the phone book,” was her reply. I found it and called him. He invited me to his home to talk. Chauncy told me that he and Ota Benga used to go to the surrounding forest, where the Pygmy taught him and his friends woodcraft, including how to hunt with a bow and arrow. I was thrilled by the unexpected series of events that led me to a first-person account by someone who actually knew and cared about “my” Pygmy.

*The Cello of Mr. O* was born when I read about a cellist who played Bach in the ruins of Sarajevo after a bombing: three lines at the bottom of a column of unrelated news in the New York Times—just a filler. But the item interested me. I went on to create my own situation and characters and to write my book. Long after it was published, a resident’s wife here at Rhoda Goldman, who with her husband had lived in Sarajevo after the war, presented me with a shell casing from there. It was beautifully engraved by an artist trained in the ancient local skill of decorating metal. Shell-casings of various sizes were the only metal available after the war.

The book, which was labeled “for all ages” also went on to become a musical play in Tokyo and a multi-media presentation in Halifax, Nova Scotia. So its message was widely delivered.”





## Welcome to RGP's Innovations— *Meal and Guest Suite Reservations*

RGP is moving to on-line reservations—families now have access to RGP's online platform to reserve a guest suite or meals in the Private Dining Room.

Payment can be made through credit card. If either the guest suite or meal is to be charged to the residents, please contact either Dining or Resident Services.

### Meal Reservations:

- Reservations must be made 12 hours in advance and are limited to tables of 4 people. For reservations of 5 or more guests, please email [reservations@plaza.org](mailto:reservations@plaza.org) for confirmation. Cancellations need to be done through your booking confirmation email at least 24 hours in advance to receive a refund. Reservations made less than 24 hours in advance are not eligible for a refund. No shows will not receive a refund.

### Guest Suite Reservations:

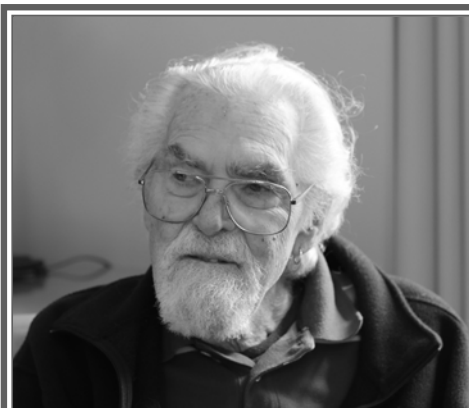
- Reservations are limited to 2 guests per room and can be made on the website. Cancellations need to be done through your booking confirmation email at least 24 hours in advance to receive a full refund. Less than 24 hours will incur a \$75 service charge. If the suite is re-booked at time of cancellation, the service charge will be waived.
- Family members can book up to 45 days in advance for guest suites and must make a reservation at least 24 hours in advance.

### COVID Guest Regulations:

- All guests must be screened when they sign in at the front desk for every visit.
- Visitors must present proof of vaccination or proof of a negative COVID test taken in the past 72 hours.
- Visitors who do not meet this criteria must meet outdoors. This also applies to children who are not yet eligible for vaccination.
- Visitors must remain masked while in common areas of the building (except when eating or drinking).
- Visitors must wear the badge they receive at sign in while inside the building. Staff will ask to see this badge before joining an activity or entering the Dining Room.

Vaccination proof or negative Covid test within 72 hours prior to visit.

[Meal and Guest Suite Reservations](#)



#### **Barry Adler 1931-2021**

I would like to thank the many people who have sent condolences or stopped me in the hall or dining room to share their heartfelt thoughts and sadness at the passing of Barry. He really loved being a part of the RGP family and a part of your lives. Remember him, dear friends, for his generous soul and his jokes that filled the room with laughter.

Evelyn



Barbara Goldman remembers her mother through a lovely set of her mother's china butterflies.

## Portrait Show Opening January 9



The Jean Henry School  
of Art students and  
RGP residents

### December Birthdays

Fred Kurlander	2
Betty Sekhri	9
Paula Smith	17
Connie Manning	19
Stephanie DiGiorgio	25
Rivka Spiegel	25



## What do you want to know about Judaism?

### You don't have to be Jewish to be Jew-ish

*This column strives to provide a better  
understanding of Jewish culture.*

But you do need to have had a Jewish mother. That's right. Even in a formerly male-dominated society the ladies were in control. Why, might you ask, is that so? A question like this can set the pace for the next issue.

As was noted in the initial article of this series, the purpose is to create a "better understanding of the nuances of Jewish culture." To do that effectively your input is required. Are you enjoying the subject matter? Do you have any questions or ideas?

Please let us know whether you'd like the column to continue. Should we explain kashrut—the dietary laws (and customs)? Jewish attitudes toward other traditions? Defined law versus traditions and customs developed throughout the millennia?

An email address ([askrgplaza@gmail.com](mailto:askrgplaza@gmail.com)) has been created to encourage you to suggest a topic, ask a question, or make a comment. So send a quick email or just drop a note in the box in front of the Administrative offices. The future of this column is up to you.



## Health Notes

Adrienne Fair, MSN, RN,  
*Assistant Executive Director*

### Welcome to 2022 *We are not bromidic!*

Bromidic??? Katheryn Allen-Katz kindly brought this “new” word to my attention. It has actually been around for a long time (since 1905, apparently) –but it is definitely new to me. It means trite, stale, unimaginative, or ready-made—essentially an antonym to innovation.

No bromidic solutions for RGP! We are arriving at 2022 after much intentional innovation, adaptation, and collective efforts. There was no light bulb moment (Aha! I’ve got it), but a continuous process of change. We have learned from the past, made changes, and observed the results. We have used collaboration, creativity, planning, and action to develop new processes and connections—to make life as safe and enjoyable as we could for residents during COVID. There has definitely been a balancing act between safety and socialization—but through innovation, we have managed to increase the social quality of life while maintaining safe protocols.

I have to laud our vaccination efforts and how this has bolstered our social life at RGP. One hundred percent of residents have received a COVID vaccine booster and the staff booster rate is nearing 100% as well. The front desk has also made a monumental effort to track all visitors’ vaccination statuses, screening them as they enter the community. It is a great joy to welcome families and friends again to the dining room for meals—as well as to activities and events.

Having ridden the waves of COVID for almost two years, we have continually re-evaluated what works for our community. Guided by our mission—to provide care and support to residents along with activities and socializing opportunities—we have discerned what is essential, what is ineffective, what is a good idea, and how to implement positive changes.

Speaking of positive changes, I am happy to announce that Samantha Curro will be assisting all of us in 2022. She has truly been able to jump in to assist with multiple departments—and is indeed a non-bromidic member of the RGP team. She will also continue her endless task of fit-testing RGP staff for N95 masks—this must be done for each new Health Services hire and renewed yearly. The use of N95s is something new to Assisted Living communities and part of ever-evolving tool kit for the ongoing COVID pandemic.

While we might regard the upcoming year as more of the same, we could innovate—take from the past, recreate it, and apply it to the future. Let’s innovate and practice new ways of dealing with an already familiar challenge, making 2022 a productive, supportive, and lively year. Let’s unbromidize. We are ready to change and adapt—and with our team of dedicated directors and staff-members, we are ready for what 2022 sends our way. Nothing is perfect, but we have learned through experience that we can and will face the challenges of the new year.





Candiece Milford,  
*Managing Director of Marketing*

## Back to the Future

It is very evident that our lives, as we knew them before 2020, will never be the same. There is no going back in time, despite how much we may want to do so; that time machine hasn't been invented yet. What we can do is to reflect on what we've learned and adapt to new ways of thinking and leading our lives.

In my daily work, my new normal is the phone ringing off the hook and conducting two to three tours per day, even coming to work on a weekend when needed. Most of these calls are from adult children who observed how their parents declined physically, emotionally, and cognitively, while staying home. Potential residents tend to be older than usual, with many in their early nineties, who finally admit that they can't manage at home anymore. They also tend to have more health issues, and several have come straight from skilled nursing.

The new normal—much higher move-in and move-out numbers—is double the average. From July 1st to December 14th, we have had forty-one move-outs for a variety of reasons and forty moves-ins which totals eighty-one in all. We anticipate this trend to continue through next year.

Happily, however, people in their early to late seventies are showing interest in greater numbers in considering a move to Rhoda Goldman Plaza.

These days, I spend more time getting to know potential new residents and carefully explaining not only our offering, but reviewing the truly important questions they should be asking. Is this new or innovative? Perhaps not, but this method also helps the more savvy researcher who understands the importance of being thorough before making a decision about a life-changing move. However, the lingo of our industry is often confusing, so I take time to educate them about the various kinds of housing options available to them in an urban San Francisco environment.

Curious as it sounds, the most “innovative” method I use is the most old-fashioned: taking time, as much time as necessary for prospective residents to feel truly heard and for me to “walk in their shoes” to understand their situation. The human-to-human, personal approach has always been my hallmark and it proves even more important in the post-Covid environment.

As we see frequently in history, not much is really new as we look back and prepare for the future.



Back to the Future, a 1989 science fiction film directed by Robert Zemeckis, written by Bob Gale, starring Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd.





Corey Weiner,  
*Director of Food and Beverage*

## Innovate—For Better or Worse *You Decide*

Innovation is our middle name\*. How else would we have fed all the residents and gotten through COVID without it? And it looks like 2022—whatever “newness” it will boast of—is, more of the same. Unremitting change. Or to think proactively—innovation—as dining services plans and re-plans to meet changing DHP and DSS regulations and requests from residents and their families.

What does the future hold? No one knows. However, even with the specter of Omicron, we do not foresee returning to lock-down. So we are moving ahead with opening up. Some of the innovations are offering breakfast, lunch, and dinner in take-out bags available in the café. Residents and their families can eat together in resident’s rooms. Residents are now allowed to meet and eat in the café. The private dining room can be reserved for family events (with the usual precautions of vaccinated, mask-wearing, residents and family members, and screening all visitors). We will be getting a new yogurt machine—not exactly an innovation, but certainly insurance that the single most important machine in the building continues to offer yogurt. The new meal reservation for guests is on-line at <https://rgplaza.myshopify.com/>. That’s truly an innovation—a collaboration between dining and amazingly talented tech-savvy staff to develop a way for visiting family members to make reservations and arrange payment. So while dining has not switched on flashing lights and fireworks, to announce its innovations, change has been occurring.....

Looking forward to the future of food, past the already vaunted vegan meat, kale and digitally printed food, we find some disturbing new trends in dining.

There might be restaurants that sell non-perishable foods, (I saw it on Google so it must be true) so that you can buy and then sell food as a work of art, thirty years later when it has increased enough in value. Chefs will be sculptors and painters, and one can envision Guy Fieri creating a seafood dish that eats itself in protest (like Banksy’s recent \$25.4-million painting that shredded itself). McDonalds may have McCars, that drive around with food ready for you, anywhere, anytime. Cloned temporary chefs will create meals for you and then the chef will disintegrate so that your meal is completely unique to you and never to be repeated, sorry Kelly. Also, I am investigating robotic servers, cooks, etc. (again, sorry Kelly). A tech startup has a plan to substitute plastic bottles with edible water bottles made with seaweed, yum. At least they are not making it out of kale. Already on the market is a chewable coffee substitute, so much more commuter friendly to have coffee you can put in your pocket!

\* Dining Innovation Services





Elizabeth Wyma-Hughes  
*Director of Resident Services*

## Looking Forward

While this time of year we usually focus on looking forward, considering new goals, and general intention setting, I've found myself reflecting on gratitude. Gratitude for the patience and understanding for our residents and families, for the incremental changes in guidance from DSS, and most of all, gratitude for our incredible staff who work together to find solutions to problems big and small.

I think back to this time last year and am so proud of how far we have come. While we carefully watch news of Omicron, we are also reviewing the many tools at our disposal. We now have rapid tests that were scarcely available just months ago! I have boxes ready for use waiting in my office. Last winter, the vaccination roll-out was just starting to become a reality. Now, the overwhelming majority of our community has been boosted in addition to 100% having been fully vaccinated. Getting essential equipment like N95s and gloves was a challenge throughout 2020. Through sheer tenacity we were able to build up our stock and are prepared should we need to use such equipment again.

The slow but steady nature of this progress can be easy to overlook, but each step has been hard won. At so many turns we were stymied by incredibly restrictive guidance, shortages of tests, unavailable personal protective equipment, and a less than streamlined vaccine roll-out. That being said, at every step of the way I have been awed by our team. From the line staff who deliver care, food, and other services with

everyone masked, gowned, and gloved when necessary, to the managers who came together seamlessly to navigate obstacles.

It is also important to remember that these efforts would not have been nearly as successful had it not be for the earnest engagement and cooperation from our residents and their loved ones. The enthusiasm from residents during our vaccination clinics remains a bright spot for me. This continued partnership is necessary as we enter a third year living with COVID. That means continuing to wear masks, letting Health Services know if you don't feel well or if you've had a known exposure, and following best practices when you go outside the community.

I know how easy it is to give in to compassion fatigue (indifference/or negativity) after the past two years, but perhaps the most innovative thing we can do is to practice gratitude. Every day we have the opportunity to decide how we will approach situations. Will we choose to express criticism or resentment? Or maybe we can go out of our way to appreciate the many, many ways in which we are fortunate. This can reliably make an impact on your experience and on the way others experience you.

While it is true that much remains to be seen as to how Omicron and other variants may affect us, I have seen our team respond decisively and work together thoughtfully. I know it is difficult to find silver linings in the past two years, but that our team has risen to the occasion is one for me. I take heart in knowing that things have been and could be worse. The experience we've gained in the past two years prepares us for whatever may happen next.

# In the Western Addition

by Jeanne Halpern, Resident

Have you ever heard of the Western Addition? Wondered what it was? Well, let me explain. It's a geographic section of San Francisco – like the Sunset, the Marina or the Castro – and it's where we live. It's bounded by four major streets: Van Ness, Fell, Masonic and California. Its boundaries were drawn in 1850, when California became a state, and it was officially added to the City in 1859 as its “western addition.” Though it's often referred to as the Fillmore, Lower Pacific Heights, Japantown, Hayes Valley or by several other names, these are actually neighborhoods within its borders.

Over the years, the Western Addition has become a place of surprising “hodgepodge-yness,” by which I mean you're likely to discover some unexpected sites on its largely residential streets. Since Rhoda Goldman Plaza is close to its geographic center, you can easily walk or ride in a wheelchair to these places: some purely historic, some still here, and some that have shifted shape over the years. Since I've taken several intriguing walks down Post and across Geary lately, let me share three recent discoveries with you: Dreamland, the People's Church, and the Macang Buddhist Monastery and Temple.

## Dreamland



Less than a block away from RGP, you'll find a large apartment complex bounded by Pierce, Post, Steiner and Sutter Streets with the dual addresses 1626 Pierce and 2000 Post. Between the early 1920's and 1985, this block was known first as Dreamland, then as the New Dreamland Auditorium and Rink, and then as Winterland, after which it became a music venue for

Bill Graham Presents with such stars as Bruce Springsteen, the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix. Its last show, New Year's Eve 1978 to New Year's Day 1979, featured the Grateful Dead.

About the original Dreamland building, I've been able to find very little. I've seen photos showing the San Francisco Opera, directed by its founder, Gaetano Merola, playing there in the late 1920's, before the War Memorial Opera House was built. But Dreamland must have thrived in “the roaring 20's” because, by its reopening in June, 1928, at the cost of \$1,000,000 (over \$15 million today), it had expanded to include an ice-show venue that could seat, for spectacles like the Ice Follies, up to 5,800 spectators. For plays, concerts and shows like the Follies Bergere, several thousand seats could be added and arranged theatrically. During the Great Depression and World War II, it apparently continued to thrive. In 1985, Dreamland/Winterland was demolished, leaving no trace behind, to be replaced by the large apartment complex down the street.

## The People's Church

Kitty-corner from the former Dreamland on Post at Steiner stands the large, modern Jones Memorial United Methodist Church. When I first saw that name, I have to admit, I felt surprised and then confused. “Jones . . . Church?” It rang a bell. I somehow knew that the charismatic pastor, Jim Jones, had preached at a church in San Francisco, maybe half a century ago. And I remembered that he had led his congregation from here to South America to build an agricultural mission in Guayana. He called it Jonestown, and of course I knew the terrible end of that story. But I couldn't let go of the strange coincidence: two churches connected by the name Jones.



I searched Wikipedia, looked up Jonestown and discovered that when Jim Jones had started his People's Church in San Francisco, it was located fewer than

five blocks from RGP. From that specific spot, he led hundreds of his parishioners to Guyana and ultimately to their deaths, on November 19, 1978, by ordering them to drink Kool-Aid spiked with poison.

Why am I writing this segment on The People's Church? For several reasons. First, we live just a few blocks away from a haunting part of our shared national history; the mass suicide in Guyana shows that in the name of freedom of religion (or something else we don't entirely grasp today), people from this area and many of their leaders had been dangerously led astray by Reverend Jim Jones. I'm also including this story because of the location itself. The People's Church stood on the site, near us, of the formerly well-respected Beth Israel Temple on Geary Street, thought to have been the first conservative synagogue west of Chicago. And finally, I'm including it because, after existing as Beth Israel and The People's Church, this site is now the home of the U. S. Post Office in the Western Addition, which some of us have often visited, never knowing the history on which it stands.

## The Macang Buddhist Monastery and the Temple of Good Fortune and Wisdom

Finally, here's a living, breathing building for you to look at. And it's less than five blocks away! When you stand across the street from 1822 Eddy Street and examine it from the top down, you're bound to admire the two elegant bell towers; then you might pause, as I did, and try to decipher the message carved in Latin between the circular stained glass windows. Next, maybe you'll notice

the classical triangle with five Greek columns framing the entryway; and finally you'll read Macang Monastery with Chinese characters above the words. A limestone wedding of two religions.

If you think this majestic building looks complicated, listen to its (simplified) history. During and after the Gold Rush and well into the 20th century, the Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco not only built churches but, as time passed, moved them around. Not to compare this to a game of musical chairs, but as the original farms at the western part of the Western Addition were replaced by residential communities and cable cars enabled people to get around more easily, there was a need for churches in new places.

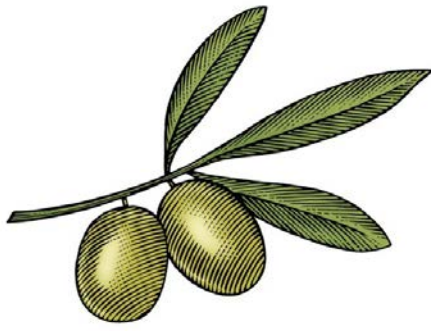


In this context, the Holy Cross Roman Catholic church was built from 1893-1898; the cornerstone was laid and the church dedicated in 1889. Many photos show how much the 1906 earthquake and fire devastated Holy Cross, but it was rebuilt at the cost of \$3,000,000.

Then came the 1989 quake. The exorbitant cost of retrofitting the Church forced its sale, in the 1990's, to the Macang Monastery and Temple. To walk inside now is to enter a different, beautiful world.

So once again, welcome to the Western Addition – as it was and as it is now. Within fewer than five blocks, you've discovered a few sites you might have glanced at or wondered about—or missed entirely. And that doesn't include the fascinating fire station, the Russian Museum, the wrecked building with a mysterious past, the memorial chapel that won an art deco prize and, of course, the Painted Ladies of Alamo Square. Unlike many residential parts of San Francisco, the Western Addition is a unique conglomeration of curiosities. You can hardly walk down a street without noticing a weird or wonderful surprise. And when you find one, please let me know.





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*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's  
Services and Mount Zion Health Fund*

# RHODA GOLDMAN PLAZA

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The appeal of Rhoda Goldman Plaza is undeniable. Older adults and their families prefer our unsurpassed assisted living and memory care community enriched by culture and tradition.

Residents enjoy superb, “made-from-scratch” cuisine that is always well reviewed by our most vocal critics; our residents! While our dining selections please the appetite, accommodations showcase spacious, private apartments designed to maximize space and comfort. In fact, we’re re-defining your life as Living Well With Assistance—we believe our community is every bit as good as a five-star hotel. And, professionally trained, courteous staff promotes your health and well-being with choices of activity programs both on and off-site.

Our Terrace Memory program provides specialized memory care to residents through therapeutic activities that enhance physical, mental, and emotional health. Both privacy and companionship are afforded on our self-contained Terrace.

Living Well With Assistance is more than a promise, but a way of life for our like-minded residents and staff who share the vision of our upscale community.

Visit Rhoda Goldman Plaza today by calling 415.345.5072.

*Founded by Jewish Family and Children's Services and Mt. Zion Health Fund in 2000, Rhoda Goldman Plaza (RGP) was established as a non-profit assisted living facility to provide a better and more secure life for older adults.*