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San Francisco Chronicle



Leah Garchik

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Thursday, July 14, 2005

A location scout for Columbia Pictures has asked the San Francisco Archdiocese for permission to shoot a feature film in the Sacred Heart Church on Fillmore Street. The church was closed because of declining membership and what the archdiocese called seismic safety issues, and the archdiocese has said it wants to sell the 120-year-old building, to be demolished and replaced with housing. Parishioners trying to save it say that 1989 earthquake damage was minor and involved only decorative elements.

Columbia plans to start shooting a Will Smith movie about Chris Gardner here in August. (Gardner, who once lined up for free meals at Glide Church, turned his life around and now runs the largest African American-owned brokerage firm in the country, based in Chicago.) And although location scout Peter Moody has not yet seen the interior of the building and is considering several sites, he has asked the archdiocese to allow Sacred Heart to serve as a setting for the movie's homeless shelter and soup kitchen. (In fact, the Black Panthers had a kitchen there early on.)

The money involved isn't in the tens of thousands, but Moody told me that St. Mark's, a Lutheran church that permitted "Rent" to shoot scenes there, is using the windfall it got from that for retrofitting. Sacred Heart stalwarts think the movie might help rescue their church, and Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi is on their side. "Our prayers are being answered," said Robert Pritchard of Save Our Sacred Heart.

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In addition to giving general permission for the use of the church, the archdiocese has to approve the specific movie script. Moody doesn't think that will be a problem because the focus of the action won't be religious. "It's not like we're going to be shooting crucifixes in the sanctuary."

Last week's item about the \$2,400 that the late Harry Jupiter left in his suit pocket -- returned when the suit was donated to St. Anthony's and a sorter found it -- inspired Bea Pixa to tell her story. Pixa was selling a house in Moraga when her real estate agent suggested she put anything valuable out of sight. She tucked her "good jewelry" into a boot. And then, in the course of a move to Walnut Creek, donated a bunch of things -- including the boot -- to Goodwill. She says the Goodwill people were "sympathetic and helpful," but nothing has turned up, "and the insurance company does not pay up for absentmindedness." Goodwill employees are not allowed to accept rewards, but she says if she recovers the jewelry, she will try to find a way around that.

The Chronicle's Sabin Russell was at Fisherman's Wharf to see the July Fourth fireworks, and overheard a man carrying a framed work of art out of a gallery there grumbling about the high cost of culture: "It cost me a half tank of gas."

And at the Richard Tuttle show at SFMOMA, Tom Marioni overheard a connoisseur telling her friend, "I guess you have to be famous to hang something like this in a gallery."

Friends of Recreation & Parks has been redubbed the San Francisco Parks Trust, I noticed in a press release about its Sept. 15 fund-raiser at Coit Tower. The new name is about a year old, and "a lot of people relate better" to it, the Trust's Patricia Ivancich said, because the old name could have been about "friends of any park in the world." But seems to me that "friends" evoked sharing sandwiches on a blanket in a meadow. Now it sounds like a bank.

The announcement before Sunday night's performance of "Goin' Dot Com!" at the Eureka Theatre was that "in the spirit of the dot-com era, we turn our cell phones on," reports Terry Abad. After that, the announcer, a cast member, mentioned that bar man Johnny Love and musician Bud E. Luv were both in the audience, and wondered whether they were related. The band leader's response: "Luv ain't a four-letter word."

P.S. One of the performers in the show is Blossom, a 145-pound St. Bernard on loan from Sky Dancer Kennel in Morgan Hill. On Friday, playwright Phil Schaaf was walking her in the Presidio when she had an altercation with a skunk. Schaaf spent what a spy describes as "a miserable night in a small apartment with a very fragrant St. Bernard"; on Saturday, he took her to the Marina Pet Hospital, where staff members administered a successful deskunkification, allowing her to go on with the show.

Upon learning that Martha Stewart read her Christmas cards aloud to fellow inmates, Gary Carr's mind was changed. "Until now," he e-mails, "I had thought the greatest Fate Worse Than Death was

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watching my neighbor's vacation slides of Spokane. This tops it."

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"You've got to learn to say, 'I'm sorry, Mother. You were right.' "

Mother to 5-year-old girl, overheard on the Embarcadero side of the Ferry Building by Ryan Phelan.

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