

San Francisco, CA



At the Top of Lombard Street

February 2012

Gentle People with Flowers in their Hair

The last time we were in San Francisco I saw a 350 lb man, dressed in a flowery yellow, chiffon robe, skipping down the street like a nine-year-old girl. I can conjure up images of Fisherman's Wharf, Street Cars, and the Golden Gate Bridge, but that jewellery bedecked, proud, monstrosity is the image I see most often when I think of San Francisco. I hope to replace the retina damage, and my preconception of San Francisco, on this trip.



Golden Gate Bridge

It is going to be a short holiday; just four days to escape our winter routine. Today is Thursday, we've been up since 3:30 to catch an early flight and will return home on Sunday. Riley is with us, and Marshall is meeting us there.



*If you're going to San Francisco
Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair
If you're going to San Francisco
You're gonna meet some gentle people there*

*For those who come to San Francisco
Summertime will be a love-in there
In the streets of San Francisco
Gentle people with flowers in their hair*

San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair) - Scott McKenzie - 1967

Thursday, February 23, 2012 – aboard United Airlines Flight 5433

U of RPS

I am looking forward to traveling with the "kids". They are adults now; independent and making their own decisions, so this trip is an opportunity to interact and see what they are up to.

I have been a parent for more than three decades and I still don't have a complete handle on it. My method has been mostly trial and error (more often "error", than "trial"), but they are all grown up now, nobody is in jail or has a monkey on their back, so I feel like I have reached a point where I have some parenting knowledge I can pass on.

Bear has been a constant and caring Mom and should take most of the credit, but I feel like I have gained sufficient paternal wisdom to expound upon it. In one short sentence, here is the parenting manual I would use if I had it to do over again:

"Parenting is 10% about telling children what to do, and 90% about giving them the confidence to figure it out themselves".

The time I spent wakeboarding and playing *Rock, Paper, Scissors* with the kids accomplished much more than countless hours of lecturing. If I had it to do over again, I would spend less time instructing and more time applauding a good Ollie. *The University of Rock, Paper, Scissors* is superior to the *University of According to Dad*, as an institution of learning.

The fact that I am giving instruction here is evidence that I am still attempting to be the Dean of the U of AD. Perhaps better advice would be:

"Parenting? You are smart, you'll figure it out."



At The Cliff House Restaurant

Friday, February 24, 2012 – Fisherman's Wharf and The Cliff House

The Dock of the Bay

*Sittin' in the mornin' sun
I'll be sittin' when the evenin' come
Watching the ships roll in
And then I watch 'em roll away again, yeah*

*I'm sittin' on the dock of the bay
Watching the tide roll away
Ooo, I'm just sittin' on the dock of the bay
Wastin' time*

*I left my home in Georgia
Headed for the 'Frisco bay
'Cause I've had nothing to live for
And look like nothin's gonna come my way*

(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay
- Otis Redding



Unlike Otis, we had a great day. We checked out Fisherman's Wharf, took a trolley ride, saw some sights, and then caught a cab across town to *The Cliff House Restaurant*. The sun was setting over the Pacific while we dined. Seagulls were doing their crazy little neck-bobbing dance on the beach, and waves crashed around the rocks, not stuff we see at home.



Saturday, February 24, 2012

Blowing in the Wind

I got a haircut in Haight-Ashbury today, which is kind of an oxymoron when you think about it.

100,000 Hippies congregated in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco during the Summer of Love in 1967. Their hairstyles were a symbol the Cultural Revolution taking place.

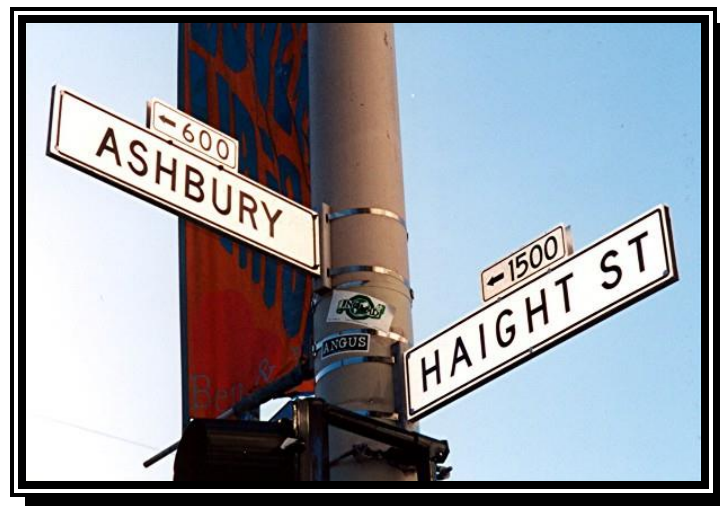
The middle-aged guy looking back at me in the barbershop mirror was only 12 years old that summer, but even as a kid, way out in rural Saskatchewan, I could feel the winds of change blowing off San Francisco Bay.



Revolution was in our music, on the television, in the chatter of young people. War, drugs, free love, and rock and roll all blended into a psychedelic hue that spread from San Francisco, around the globe.

Haight-Ashbury still has a 60's feel. Dread locks, floppy hats and sunglasses cover tired old heads that look as if they have inhaled far too many bongos. Peace signs and tie-dye remain de rigueur. I resisted

the urge to buy a pipe and something to fill it with and got back on the tour bus. Bob Dylan's *Blowing in the Wind* was strumming between my short-cropped ears.



Sunday, February 26, 2012

Leaving on a Jet Plane

As predicted, the trip went fast. We saw some sights.

We rode across the Golden Gate Bridge, saw Alcatraz (which scared us all straight), sea lions, painted ladies, and Lombard Street. Chinatown is fascinating; busy, colourful, and exotic.



People-watching was Bear's favourite activity. They come in every shape and size, and from every planet, apparently.

The image of a 350 lb flower child is no longer my predominant vision of San Francisco. There was a pirate downtown, with a frilly, tri-corner hat, a long greasy black coat and a bad eye who has replaced the original image.

Scarface and Machine Gun Riley at Alcatraz

We had a lot of great meals in SFO but last night was the best. Neither the food nor the ambiance was outstanding; we just ate seafood in a touristy bar and grill. It was the conversation that made the evening memorable. We were discussing the Cultural Revolution, Marshall asked about the Vietnam War, and it took off from there. We meandered through the 60's and 70's, took a detour through Bugs Bunny cartoons, made a left at "dogs" and finished up with a round of Russian Politics.

I don't know what Bear and the kids gained from it, but I came away with a feeling that the world is unfolding as it should. The Revolution is still happening; great people like Marshall and Riley are bringing fresh ideas and energy. They will shake up the establishment and change the world in ways we hadn't thought of.

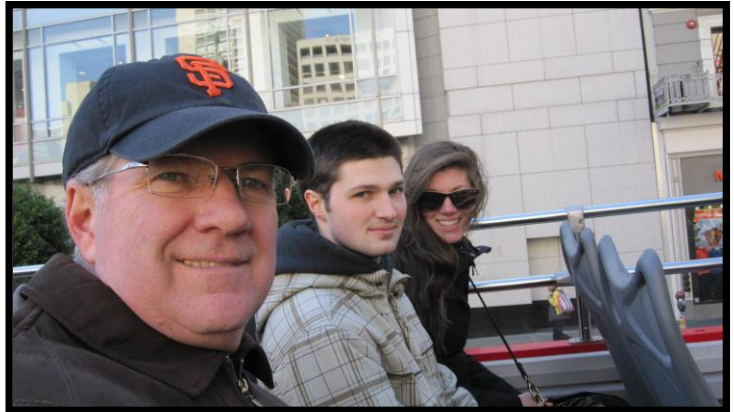


Boudin Sourdough Bread

*All my bags are packed I'm ready to go
I'm standin' here outside your door
I hate to wake you up to say goodbye
But the dawn is breakin' its early morn
The taxi's waitin' he's blowin' his horn
Already I'm so lonesome I could die*

*So kiss me and smile for me
Tell me that you'll wait for me
Hold me like you'll never let me go
Cause I'm leavin' on a jet plane
Don't know when I'll be back again
Oh babe, I hate to go*

– Peter, Paul, and Mary



Peace

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG8Ect3Xn7w>

Brown-eyed Girl – Van Morrison

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fa3h3pnhq8s>

Leaving on a Jet Plane - Peter, Paul, and Mary

<https://youtu.be/MMFj8uDubsE>

Blowin' in the Wind – Bob Dylan