

I Left My Heart.... February 2013



With ethnological collections piling up The Dragon Lady and I flew from Bangkok to San Francisco, the heart of the tribal art scene on the left coast. The '08 recession whacked it badly and I was hoping it had recovered.



Alas, the curator of the giant Asian Art Museum was apologetic: still no acquisition budget. And the same would go for the other giant, the de Young, though while there we checked out the current display of Dutch paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries, among my favorites. Vermeer's *Girl With a Pearl Earring* is his masterpiece and it's a beautiful work, blowing *Mona Lisa* off the wall. I overheard a patron remark, "The Dutch are a good looking people." "Thank you," I rejoined, and we all laughed.



We timed our visit to take in the annual Tribal Art Show. Dealers report sales still down 50-60%. Still, it was a pleasure, and enlightening, to see what was on offer and values. Mostly African, not that much from South and Southeast Asia which is our main area of interest, though my eyebrows bobbed at the prices of the latter. The one item outrageously priced at one vendor were small Thai wooden penises (they provide magical protection as well as aid to barren women and can be very elaborately carved, by monks, with Pali writing - we have a considerable and varied collection, the largest over a foot long). These were simple ones with very little age that cost in Bangkok \$3-4 but were tagged at \$150. A distinctive, very primitive Himalayan mask in our personal collection that I paid \$5 for 30 years ago in Kathmandu had an asking price of \$20,000, though another dealer had it at a more reasonable \$6000. Another item in our personal collection, a century-old Igorot (Luzon) headhunting shield flanking our fireplace I paid \$50 for in '82 was asking \$800, but that price made sense. Genuine tribal art with age and patina is exceedingly rare in the field these days (unlike the Golden Age of collecting, which ended in the late '80s), causing a legitimate escalation in prices.



I literally bumped into Jessica Lindsay Phillips, co-star of *Treasure Trader*. She and her late fiancé Billy Jamieson generously hosted the launch of *Adventurous Dreams*, *Adventurous Lives* in Toronto, an incredible affair with oysters on the half shell and 250 in attendance, with chapter contributors flying in from all over North America. Jessica will be one of my argonauts in Turkey in September. I've chartered a 31 meter luxury *gulet*, or yacht, and *The Dragon Lady* and 12 of our friends will spend two weeks exploring old Greek and Roman routes and ruins along the Turquoise Coast. The other chap is Joshua Dimondstein of Dimondstein Tribal Art of LA. I did business with his late dad Morton, a great guy, back in the 1980s. (That's not my gut sticking out, BTW, my thick passport pouch under my shirt is, well, mostly responsible.)



We also explored Beat history in North Beach, surprisingly little changed from the 1950s. Here's the most famous bookstore in North America - and responsible for freeing speech through owner Ferlingetti's (still alive at 92!) censorship battles starting with Allan Ginsburg's *Howl*. Ginsburg gave a poetry reading at SFU in the late '60s and I sat directly in front of him, he on a mattress on a slightly raised dias in a packed auditorium. Balding and bespeckled, he seemed like a neat guy, though his poetry, laden with Eastern mysticism, was beyond me. The Beats have always fascinated me because I've never been much for living conventionally either, it bores me. Also, there were just a handful of them really, like Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady (Dean Moriarty of *On the Road*). Yet, they caused a significant cultural ripple and were progenitors of the massive Hippie "flowering" here during the Summer of Love, 1967. And I'm always interested in other writers' lives.



City Lights is everything a book store should be. Cozy, lived in, and comfortable. Su bought me two books on Kerouac and the Cassadys.



Just across Kerouac Alley from City Lights is the Vesuvio, one of the all time great bars on the planet, and I'm a connoisseur. Madame Su is generously trying to give another iPhone away, like she did in Buenos Aires in October (when a sleazebag on a bicycle sped by and apple picked it...).



Here Kerouac got pissed one day when he was supposed to jump up to Big Sur to visit Henry Miller. Kerouac called every hour saying he was coming, but he never made it. You can see the original gas lighting.



Out the window you can see the Hungry I where Lenny Bruce was heard to say the nasty f-word, leading to his long battles with censorship that led ultimately to his death in an LA bathroom with a needle sticking out of his arm. My friend Jerry Hopkins of Bangkok, then writing for *Rolling Stone*, witnessed the scene. I think way back in the '60s I had an album, *Johnny Rivers at the Hungry I* (or was it at LA's Whisky a-go-go?). I always liked that name, Rivers. That's where I lifted it for the protagonist, Lee Rivers, in *Thai Gold*. Lee has a nice east-west ring to it and was the name of a good friend during my university days. The Beat Museum next door features, among much else of interest, the '49 Hudson used in the screen adaptation of *On The Road* released a year or two ago.



Lonely Planet is wrong: Jack Kerouac didn't write the famous endless scroll version of *On the Road* here at 29 Russell Road atop Russian Hill. Ginsberg says that version was done by the time Jack moved in with Neal and Carolyn Cassady in 1952. She pens in *Off the Road* that he only tweaked it and massaged the ending, when she was being poked by both husband Neal and Jack, while Neal was poking anything in a skirt (and Allan occasionally who had major hots for him). *Visions of Cody* was the book Jack concentrated on while here.



Jack and Carolyn used to take long walks, including Washington Square which anchors the top of North Beach, which runs along Columbus. If I lived in SF, I'd live in North Beach.



San Franciscans like abbreviating. Thus, San Francisco shrinks to Frisco, Marinated County distills to Marin County and, here, Coitus Tower becomes just Coit Tower. Carolyn and Jack used to climb Telegraph Hill to enjoy the view.



The *Trieste* is a famous cafe where Ginzburg, Ferlingetti, Kerouac and the Beat poets hung out. There's even a framed picture of Coppolla working on *The Godfather* script, as well as other celebs like Bill Cosby prepping his own coffee. It was also here that the North American cappuccino & espresso craze began.



The *Trieste* name intrigued me. Curious, I emailed Don Walsh who, with Jacque Piccard, in 1960 descended into the Mariana Trench in their bathysphere *Trieste*, asking if that's where he borrowed the name. Don's a "Babylon by the Bay" boy, as he fondly calls his hometown of SF. He replied, "Wish it was. I could have scored a lot of free drinks over the years. No, it was named after the city in Italy where the major components were built in the Adriatic Shipyard." Don's a fellow member of The Explorers Club and contributed to *Adventurous Dreams, Adventurous Lives*.



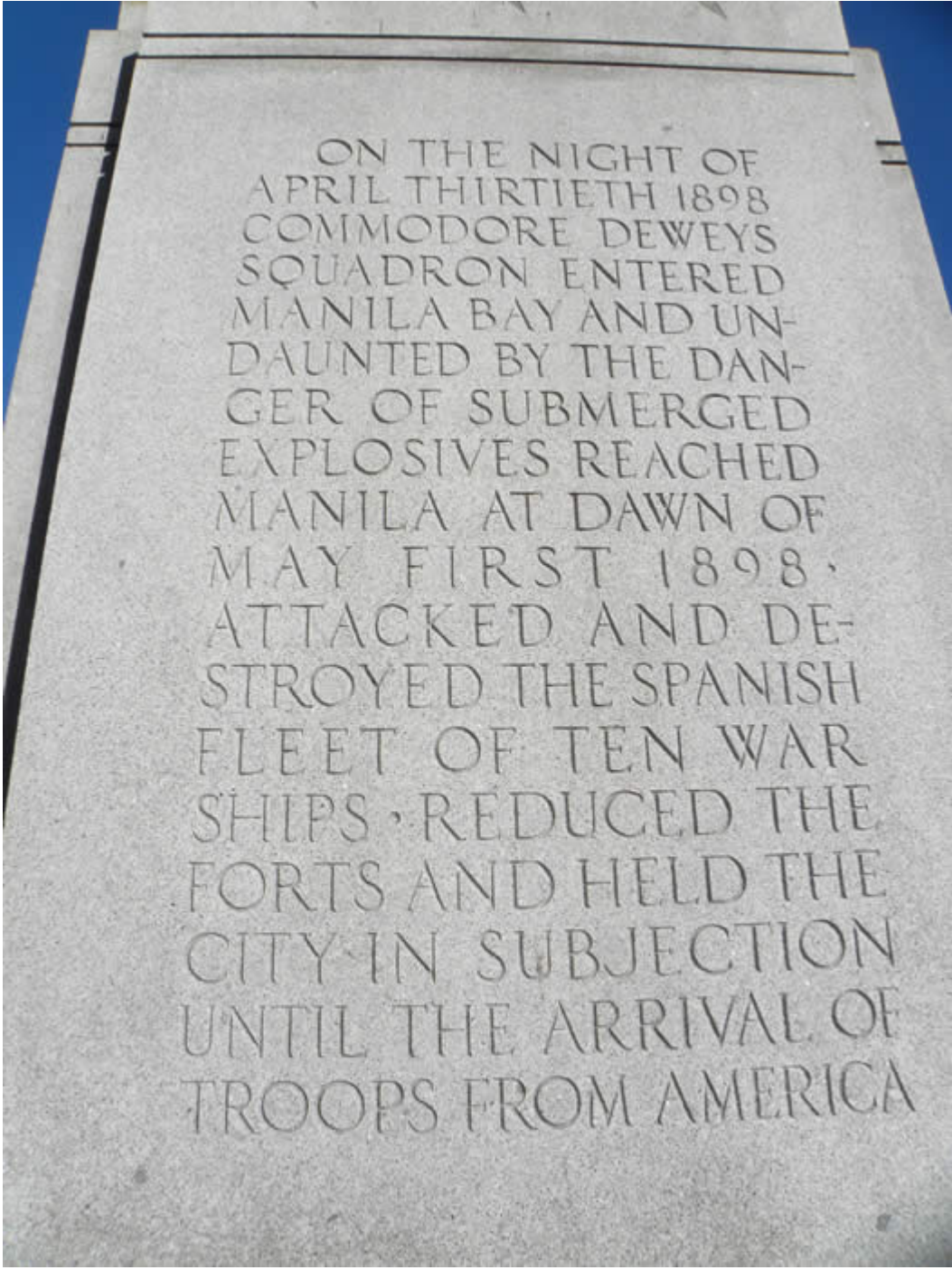
I was about to swing in here but then Su disappointed me by informing me they just gave manicures. Damn.



We also explored family roots. Su's grandfather Onishi was an adventurer who sailed here from Japan in 1895. He would have gravitated to Chinatown (besides Japantown), because of the Asian connection. He later moved up to Vancouver and launched a strawberry farm in the Lower Mainland and was there in 1918 when his wife was swept away in the Spanish Flu, leaving him to raise eight kids, one being Su's Mom who passed on only a couple years ago at 96. And then along came Pearl Harbour and Strawberry Hill was "appropriated" and they were shipped to the beet fields of Alberta (a Mission shopping centre now sits where it was...we're talking millions lost). Her family didn't have an easy time until she met me, and since then her life has been idyllic, of course.



I also have SF connections. My g-great-grandfather William Leonard Schoonover II answered the call to “Remember the Maine.” This pillar, dedicated by Teddy Roosevelt, another Dutchman whose family also has been in North America since the 1600s, anchors Union Square. Our hotel, the highly recommended Andrews, is two blocks away. They even serve complimentary wine at 5:00pm. That's civilized.



ON THE NIGHT OF
APRIL THIRTIETH 1898
COMMODORE DEWEYS
SQUADRON ENTERED
MANILA BAY AND UN-
DAUNTED BY THE DAN-
GER OF SUBMERGED
EXPLOSIVES REACHED
MANILA AT DAWN OF
MAY FIRST 1898.
ATTACKED AND DE-
STROYED THE SPANISH
FLEET OF TEN WAR
SHIPS, REDUCED THE
FORTS AND HELD THE
CITY IN SUBJECTION
UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF
TROOPS FROM AMERICA

It commemorates the launch of the American Empire - their acquisition of the Philippines in the Spanish-American War.



Born in Minnesota in 1860, in Missouri 1870-1885, Wild Will was in the Dakotas when he signed up with the 1st Regiment, ND Infantry Volunteers in 1898. To cheering Fargo crowds he boarded a train to San Francisco's Presidio for training here at Fort Merritt. It's covered by houses now. There's every chance that both ancestors - Su-san's and mine - could have been in SF at the same time, perhaps sharing an opium den together, in one of those great coincidental moments..



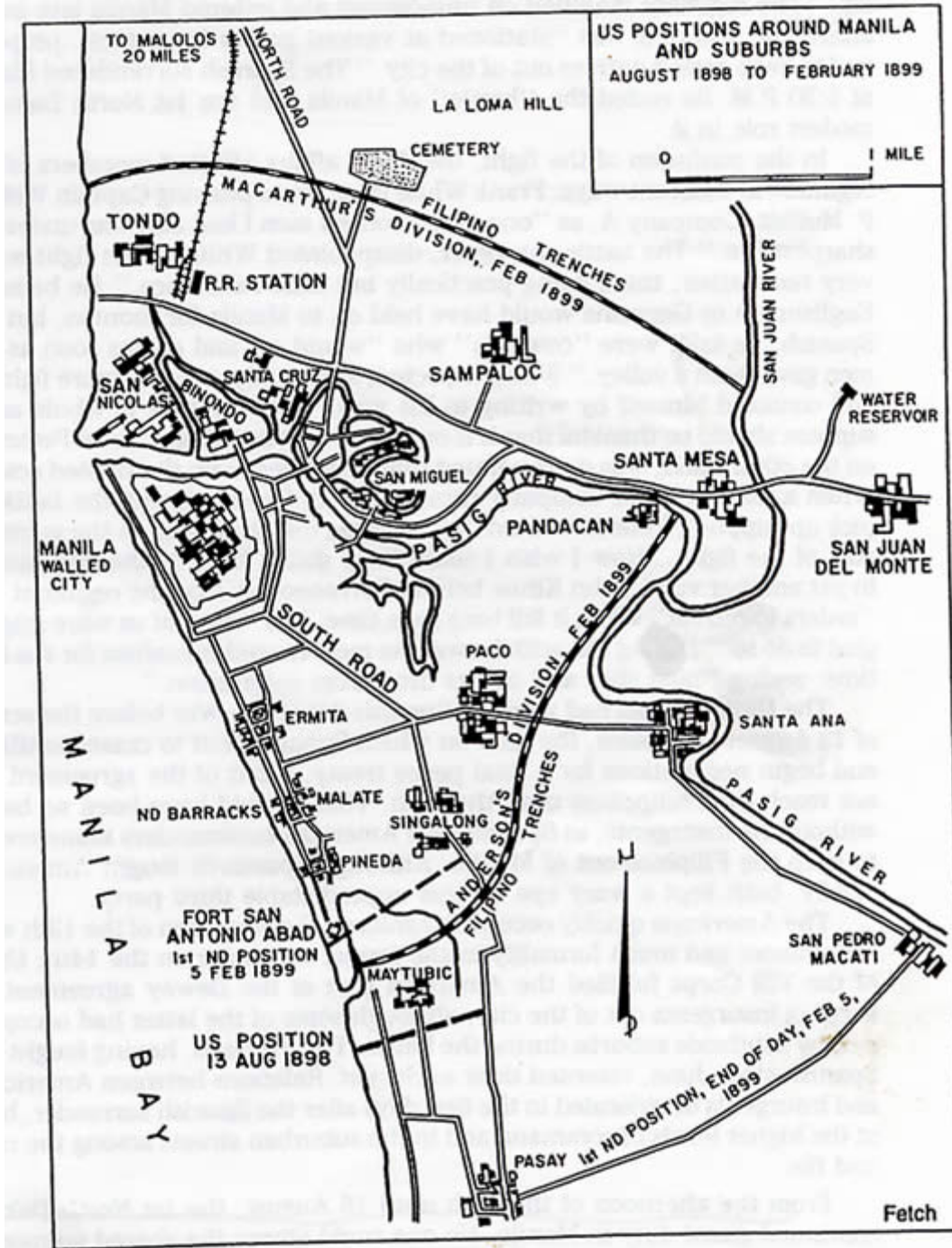
One of these men is my ancestor but which one? He was described in military records as 5'8", sandy complexion, blue eyed with light brown hair. He was an engineer and "37 10/12" years while half were 21-25.



We know what his late wife, my g-great-granny looked like. Mattie nee Baker was a good lookin' broad! She unfortunately died (birthing problems?) in her early 20s in 1884 leaving two boys which Will farmed out to his mother Almira to raise. He then sold the Missouri farm and galloped out into the Wild West (Jesse James was gunned down just 65 miles away, in 1882). Never to remarry. The love of his life? Is this why he became a carouser? Although he also became an engineer and in the 1920s had enough talent that he held a US patent for a "piston position indicator," when he died in 1924 in Washington state he did so broke. The years from 1885-1898 are lost.



He shipped out for the Philippines aboard the *Valencia* June 27 and would have seen Fort Point while passing, here below this arch of the Golden Gate Bridge (made famous in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* with Kim Novak), though it's unlikely he was in it as the area he trained was at the south end of the Presidio. His steamers stopped in Honolulu going out, Nagasaki and Yokohama returning. (Another California connection is through Kim. She's married to a veterinarian [now retired], whose partner [also retired] is married to my cousin Barbara whose g-great-granddad is also Wild Will. Their practice was in Monterey. Interestingly enough, my mother's maiden name is Novak, but there's no connection. It translates in Ukrainian as Newman, ie the "new man" in a village.)



After winning the mock Battle of Manila the volunteers expected to return home—but DC ordered them to stay another year! This led to mass insubordination and resulted in 563 court marshals and summary court trials for 7,090 among the then 21,000 soldiers.

Co. I had the worst record—remember, they're from the Wild West, the Dakotas—and amongst these Wild Willy had to be a leader. Obviously a long time hellraiser, he was up on seven charges and five court marshals. He was twice charged with disobeying orders, breaking out of the guard house, drunk and disorderly, being AWOL, twice for

creating a disturbance, larceny (stole a dozen eggs from a Filipino) and making threats (I know, that's nine, but that's what the records say). One led to 30 days at hard labor. What a guy! A great Schoonover! A chip off the ol' block of earlier and colourful ancestor Kit Davids, a founder of Kingston, NY, on the Hudson River in the 1600's who has chapters in two books about him, and who was constantly at odds with Peter Steyvesant for selling whisky to the Indians and the like – but, when there was injun problems, it was Kit Peg Leg Pete turned to for help because of his knowledge of them same redskins, their ways and language.



However, while waiting in the monkey house for his last trial, the Filipino insurgency broke out and Will (that's what he went by) and 16 others were released to take up arms and 13, including Wild Willy, had their charges dropped because they put up a good showing (note the 1st North Dakota {ND} positions in the map above on Feb 5, lower part, advancing from Fort San Antonio to the Pasay to Macati line). He fought in three engagements. He would have been left speechless to learn that 90 years later his g-great-grandson would set chapters of an adventure-thriller, *The Manila Galleon*, in the very fort, Santiago, he defended. I was taken aback myself for when I was writing the book I didn't know about Will's Asian adventures. I thought I was the first Schoonover to come to Asia.



August 30, 1890, after the *Grant* landed at Angel Island he marched up Market Street to cheering crowds, back to the Presidio. He was mustered out Sept. 25. And I'm sure promptly got drunk and laid. (A cousin a few times removed, George Van Fleet, earned a Silver Star fighting during the insurrection, but this was later.)

Appendix C
Company I & Company B



Figure 81 Home from the Philippines, Wahpeton's Company I posed for this photo at the Presidio. In a commemorative edition of the *Wahpeton Globe* published December 30, 1921, the soldiers were numbered and identified as follows:

1 2nd Lt John Russater; 2 Captain William R Purdon; 3 1st Sgt Arthur E McKean; 4 Sgt Mark J Forkner; 5 Sgt Charles W Lauder; 6 QM Sgt William D Purdon; 7 Sgt Walter O Lippet; 8 Sgt Orlin M Jones; 9 Corp Nels J Bothne; 10 Corp Harry R Kramer; 11 Corp William H Auman; 12 Corp Lorene Campbell; 13 Hosp Stwd Walter E Patton; 14 Corp Fred W Whitcomb; 15 Corp James E Griffen; 16 Corp Herbert J Brand; 17 Pvt Julius Schendel; 18 Pvt James E Carney; 19 Pvt Frank A Connolly; 20 Pvt Louis E Anderson; 21 Pvt James M Quinn; 22 Corp Fergus A Mullen; 23 Pvt Fred G Harbour; 24 Pvt Henry P Musfeldt; 25 Pvt George J Seidlinger; 26 Pvt Jacob Anfinson; 27 Pvt Alpheus H Palmer; 28 Pvt Canute Brandrup; 29 Pvt George Gebro; 30 Pvt James Murphy; 31 Pvt John J Gabriel; 32 Pvt James D Murphy; 33 Pvt Thomas Mangan; 34 Pvt Olaf Leaf; 35 Pvt Charles H Anderson; 36 Pvt Alexander Scott; 37 NO NUMERAL 37; 38 Pvt Felix Blanchett; 39 Pvt Eddie St John; 40 Pvt William L Schoonover; 41 Pvt William J Mullen; 42 Pvt Fred H Schendel; 43 Pvt Gus Sweeney; 44 Pvt Bernard Klein; 45 Pvt Fred J Gebro; 46 Pvt Otto Paulson; 47 Pvt Fred J Debbert; 48 Pvt Charles Senkle; 49 Pvt Thomas Stafne; 50 Pvt James Pruitt; 51 Pvt Oscar J Olson; 52 Pvt Edward H McCullough; 53 Pvt Otto Boehler; 54 Pvt Benjamin Holter; 55 Pvt John P Olson; 56 Pvt Chesley T Talley; 57 Pvt Byron Woodbury; 58 Pvt Thomas Schott; 59 Pvt James Snodgrass; 60 Pvt William H Brose; 61 Pvt Charles J Adams; 62 Pvt Peter O Gunness; 63 Pvt Emil J Pepke; 64 Pvt Thomas Hudec; 65 Pvt Clarence A Mitchell; 66 Pvt Otto O Swank. **NOT PICTURED:** 1st Lt William B Aspinwall; 1st Lt Joseph A Slattery; Sgt John F Faytle; Pvt Berg Linderson; Pvt Edward C Littell. Pvt Lester R Waterman left Manila with the company, but he was left sick and died in Nagasaki

Incredible! I was about to send this Blah Blah out when an email came in from cousin Milwaukee Mary, who runs the massive Schoonover Family Website at <https://sites.google.com/site/schoonoversinamerica/index>. She found a photo of Wild Willy taken when they reached the Presidio! He's #40! We've been searching for decades! Now she'll try to track down that original newspaper and hopefully a clearer picture! Such is genealogy...one is never, ever finished, and I've spent thousands of dollars, hours and miles so far pushing mine back 13 generations to the 1600s and Holland. (His

hat's pulled down to the left...was he a southpaw...?) Now we can restudy that earlier class picture.



Another cousin with California credentials is Jo Van Fleet who picked up the Supporting Actress Oscar for portraying James Dean's estranged mother in *East of Eden*. Among others, she was in *Gunfight at the OK Corral* and *Cool Hand Luke*. Another Hollywood connection was Gloria Jean Schoonover who acted with W.C. Fields in *Never Give a Sucker An Even Break*, co-starred with *Bing Crosby* in *Going My Way*, and *Copacabana*. Two Schoonover cousins (and also descendents of Wild Will), brothers Fred and Jim, were part of Mario Lanza's entourage in the '50s, and Jim was also a "private duty nurse" to Errol Flynn and Spencer Tracy. Wild Willy's son (and Fred and Jim's uncle) William Leonard III was a producer/playwrite/actor who, with a private train car, ran a tent show up and down the midwest out of Missouri from 1906 until the Depression literally killed him, but that's another story. No surprise I started out as a disc jockey after university; I seem to have show biz bubbling through my veins. And there's a few significant adventurers back there too.



After Su's Saudi days in the '80s, she spent a year in Japan, and her best friend was Fumiyo Noguchi, who not only generously hosted us in Marin County but toured us around. Here atop Twin Peaks.



Geoff Alexander hosts the impressive Thai Oasis website (<http://www.thaioasis.com/>), and splits his time between San Jose, Cheyenne and Bangkok. He coined the term: "The Bangkok School of Writers" - writers who make the city a character, with its spooks, Air America pilots, eccentric characters, bars, backstreets and brothels most often wrapped into adventure-thriller form. There must be at least 30 writers there now and dozens of books - but guess which one launched the school back in the '80s and was first to attract an international publisher (Bantam)? *Thai Gold/The Bangkok Collection/Nepal Gold* (four different publishers' titles so far with over 130,000 sold and still selling, including in ebook form). I'm flattered, frankly.



I'm always pleased when readers report they love Tysee in *Thai Gold*, as they frequently do. Indeed, one reader was so disgusted and angered when Tysee "dumped" Lee and disappeared from the tale that he threw it in the garbage...only to pull it out several days later compelled to finish...and learn the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey used to say. I'm pleased because I wasn't confident in my ability to create a major, credible female character. Fortunately, I had two excellent models for Tysee, for she was a composite. The secret is out. One was a dancer at Patpong's Superstar bar. And please meet Hiromi Nomura, equally lovely, quick of mind and wit, that mind ever positive, curious, enthusiastic, happy and open, her laugh joyous and, above all, adventurous. Doesn't that sound like Tysee to a T?



Everyone who knows me knows who the first person Lee is modeled on so you might say this is a photograph of Lee and Tysee 25 years after their fictitious Grand Adventure sweeping from Mt. Everest, across Southeast Asia to New York. Hiromi is today a renowned San Francisco floral artist (Belle Flora her company), married to dentist Gary, and the mother of twins. Shot taken at Sausalito.



The only bad thing about San Francisco is having to leave it...gawd, I love this city more each time I visit. And every time I do that tribute to the city in Tony Bennett's signature song gets stuck in my craw. It was playing in stereo in my head the entire two weeks and I've been back almost a week and he's still following me around, belting it out.... Love it. Sing it Tony!