

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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A time of tumult, fast actions, and kaleidoscoping realities in early 2016. The Grim Reaper has been busy, leading a whole band of Baby Boomer musicians from the stage, and also a man who walked on the Moon, and men and a woman of letters and the law. Always, and most extra-especially on a Leap Day, ROARSHOCK PAGE reflects its current time, while communicating through space and time.

CALIFORNIA STREET SKETCHES THÉÂTRE DE LA LUMIÈRE

California Street and Polk Street, a major crossroads of the Polk Gulch district, was an important San Francisco commercial corner from the 19th century onward. At that corner Frank Norris located the dental practice of the title protagonist in his novel *McTeague, A Story of San Francisco*, (1899), described as being on the second floor with the replica of a great gold tooth dangling above the street entrance as advertisement. The tooth was visualized in a 1920s film of the novel, and the replica was realized in the neighborhood in the early 21st century when hung above the door of McTeague's Saloon, a couple of blocks away on Polk. On the north side of California, above an oddly placed suburban-style bank branch building on the corner, was another strange bit of architecture, the Lumière Theatre which showed art-house independent films from 1967 until it was closed on September 23, 2012.

Auguste and Louis Lumière ["The Light Bros.,"] were the first filmmakers in history. They patented the cinematograph, a process that allowed simultaneous viewing by multiple parties. Their first film, *Sortie de l'usine Lumière de Lyon* (1895), is now considered the first true motion picture, even though Louis Le Prince's *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888) pre-dated it by seven years.

A.. A... lived for a long time on that block, back of an old residential hotel and the Lumière. The theatre's back exit opened on a parking-lot, and directly below his southern facing windows was the mystical and spiritual garden of Saint Steve, a true curiosity and natural wonder since the 1960s. The theatre was divided inside over several screens, so challenging films were shown simultaneously. Looking up at the skyline, A.. A... could see the Sutro Tower and knew that the air was full of signals including radio and television broadcasts. Still, sitting at his window with late afternoon sunlight sparkling in the garden below, he almost felt the vibes drifting up from

whatever provocative film was playing. The absurdity of such a fancy become obvious in the 21st century when the ether was full, not just of broadcast signals, but also myriad cellular telephone conversations, wireless internet connections via all manner of stationary and mobile technological devices.

A street fair and blues festival was held annually on Polk for a weekend, the street closed to automobile and bus traffic and filled with craft and food booths, wine and beer gardens, stages and people. A tall stage was always at the corner of California, with an artificial lawn laid out on the pavement. The Royal Theatre, another old movie palace, was on the west side of Polk from 1916 until all but the façade was demolished in 2003. The venerable Swan Oyster Depot remained next door, but it became near impossible to get in after Anthony Bourdain had lunch there on television. On the east side of Polk was a chain drug store in the ground floor of a building with the legend Maple Hall atop its façade. A.. A... once read in a newspaper article that the upper floor contained an old ballroom, sealed off and untouched for many decades. He could imagine what it must look like—a time capsule of an earlier era—and wished he could access it, or, better yet, open it up for some of his accomplished musician friends to lead the dance and kick out the jams! Once, in conjunction with the Polk Street Blues Festival, the Lumière Theatre showed the classic movie *Greed* (1924), adapted and directed by Erich von Stroheim from Frank Norris' *McTeague*. The silent film was accompanied on this occasion with live organ music performed by local bluesman Melvyn "Deacon" Jones. The amazing film, incomplete and much of it long lost, had location scenes filmed in San Francisco and surrounding environs, including the Cliff House and the East Bay shoreline (rare film glimpses before development and urbanization came to the whole of the Bay Area). Scenes supposedly depicting 1890s Polk Street were actually filmed on Hayes Street in the early 1920s, but that in no way detracted or distracted from their coolness. A.. A... attended the afternoon show with his wife, which they both enjoyed, and long after talked about and fondly remembered. Truth be told, in all the years that A.. A... shared the block with the Lumière, that was the only time he passed through its doors, which was a remarkable fact, even in those lean years when entertainment dollars were far and few between. In 2012, the world did not end (as some folks, both ancient and modern, had predicted it would), but the Lumière Theatre closed, another lost movie house in an era when even those of modest means were able to set-up

a personal home theater. After the films ceased, the building was vacant for some time before it was taken over and renovated by a local clothing manufacturer—which truly seemed an anachronism in early 21st century San Francisco. Before many a feature and even after the movies stopped, the Cordon Bleu Vietnamese Restaurant was there serving up Imperial Rolls and 5-spiced roast chicken at their tiny counter. The meaning of the Number 5 entrée was deep old school inside the neighborhood mythology. There was a bar in the middle of the block (the north side of California) that never stayed the same. It was called by so many different names and rotated ever changing faces and always seemed eerie and weird. At least to A.. A... who never much liked any of the bars on his block, except for the John Barleycorn on Larkin. Before the Dragon Lady evicted it, but when the Barleycorn was in business A.. A... could seldom afford the luxury of drinking there, even though it was on his block. There were other businesses along that block of California. For years The Front Room pizza parlor on the corner, until they too were evicted. After many years vacant a dinner opened and attracted lines of young men and woman seeking brunch, Across the street a higher-end brunchapocalopolis also happened, every weekend during the tech brunch years in the City. For many years on the block there was a shop selling imported British goods, and there was an often changing pizza slice shop. The block had dry cleaning, wash and fold, and a formal wear rental shop. Also, there was a cat hospital. The south side always nearly empty after the retail clothier gave way to the thrift store. There was the strange building back up the street, no business there, and the cheap old sign: New St. Francis Market LIQUOR.

In January 1995, one evening A.. A... was watching a first-run broadcast of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. In this episode the Federation crew accidentally traveled back in time to San Francisco, September 2024. The action in the drama took place in the characters past, but in A.. A...’s future. Miles O’Brien and Kira Nerys materialized in 2024, and via communicator reported that they were currently at the corner of California and Polk. It seemed a remarkably coincidental detail, and for A.. A... a moment of exceptional television mirth. When his old television broke, A.. A... did not replace it for many years. In 2015, he bought himself a present for his 55th Birthday—a 55 inch screen 4K 3D Smart Television with a sleek curved screen. He could pull in 60+ digital broadcast channels directly off the Sutro Tower, and via the internet access all episodes of *Star Trek*, plus more movies and other content than he could, or would, ever watch. It was a rebirth, of sorts, of the Lumière Theatre, in his living room. He well knew that the arrival of the home theater was what had led to the closure of the Lumière and most of the City’s other movie houses. One thing of which he was sure, in a wild and historic city, he lived on a cosmic block, where dreams and realities could be perceived through waves of shifting sounds and moving pictures through times of darkness and light.

— D. A. Wilson

FEBRUARY ALMANAC

02/01 1996	The Communications Decency Act was passed by United States Congress.
02/02 2016	GROUNDHOG DAY
02/04 2016	Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man to walk on the Moon, died in Hereford, Texas.
02/05 2016	JTEL’s DAY
02/06 2016	Dan Hicks died in Mill Valley, CA.
02/08 2016	NEW MOON
02/11 1938	The first Science Fiction TV program on BBC adapted part of Karel Čapek’s play <i>R.U.R.</i> which coined the term “robot.”
02/13 2016	Antonin Scalia died in Shafter, Texas.
02/16 2016	Boutros Boutros-Ghali died in Cairo.
02/17 2016	Tony Phillips of the Oakland A’s died.
02/18 2016	San Francisco Giant Jim Davenport died.
02/19 2016	Umberto Eco died in Milan.
2016	Harper Lee died in Monroeville, AL.
02/22 2016	FULL SNOW MOON
02/24 1942	The Great Los Angeles Air Raid.
02/26 1829	Levi Strauss (Lüb Strauß) was born in Buttenheim, Kingdom of Bavaria.
02/27 1812	Lord Byron’s first address to the House of Lords defended Luddite violence vs. Industrialism in his Nottinghamshire.
02/28 1939	Erroneous word “dord” was discovered in <i>Webster’s New International Dictionary, Second Edition</i> , prompting investigation.
02/29 2004	President of Haiti Jean-Bertrand Aristide removed by U.S. following a coup d’état.
2012	Singer Davy Jones of The Monkees died.
2016	LEAP DAY

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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.

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