WANIY HA

unday morning. The climate is crisp. Foggy, clear, cold and balmy. The Castro may be gray and icy; a few blocks over in the Mission you need only Ray-Bans and a T-shirt. But it's always crisp here, with a hint of eucalyptus, sea air and mountain sod.

In the tough, sad Tenderloin, clamorous as a prison cell block where hookers, junkies and the wide-eyed children of Asian immigrant families compete for space to live, a church service is

just cranking up. At the same time, in restaurants atop the city's famous hills (Nob, Russian and Telegraph), brunch is being served.

Each Sunday, these two events seem as different as an elephant's charge and a flea's sneeze. But together, they cradle and join the city. The people who orchestrate them are the best clue to the heart, soul and moxie of San Francisco.

Inside Glide Church, at exactly 9 and 11 a.m., the explosion starts as an electric organ hums. The whoosh of a hundred paper fans flap at flushed faces-people of every color. Suddenly,

the congregants, a mix of life-long devotees, ex-prostitutes, former predators and lost souls-now found-begin to sing; the Glide gospel ensemble sways and supports great soloists, all reaching for heaven.

At that moment, on the Embarcadero, at the end of a pastel colored block of apartments, the Delancey Street Restaurant is on its umpteenth serving of eggs Benedict to the power elite. Maybe patrons are having hash browns or even a sinful chocolate sundae called a Herbie, named after the departed daddy of this flock's leader, Mimi Silbert. She runs the place. Not just this hip restaurant and the cafe' around the corner, but a huge moving coampany, warehouse, car repair shops, Christmas tree lots, an accredited college. I could go on, but you get the idea.

Silbert-tiny, tan, a bristling fireball-makes her mark here in a way that egotistical politicians, mean spirited consultants and other assorted elected and appointed goofballs never could.

Silbert's Delancey Streets eatery is also the most successful substance-abuse and criminal-rehab operation in the world. All of it-including the polite, bow-tied waiters at the restaurant who were once murderes, dopers and derelicts-is the outgrowth of the vision of this remarkable woman.

Mimi, Cecil and Jan. Delancey and Glide. Warm, tough and resolute, these extraordinary meccas of magic give us our integrity. They offer us an example of how to avoid the kind of

grasping desperation and jagged ambition that

impales people in other places.

Heaven and hell, I've been here 25 years. My acquired tastes: Jazz at the Ramp, Twin Peaks at a.m. The late, hilariously insulting Chinatown waiter Edsel Ford. Powell and Market streets, where sublimely crazy people rant about God while pickpockets hover near chess masters playing on dingy card tables. Those huge, baggy-assed burgers on Folsom.

My wife arrived with fresh eyes and a better imagination. She loves the zoo on a slow week-

end, the museum out by the Presidio, that Thai place on Clement for dinner-Masa's, when we're decked out-or a leisurely backyard lunch at a place she won't let me name where they let her hang out all afternoon. People there respect her privacy as they do nowhere else.

ur first real date was at Moose's restaurant for a cheeseburger and a drink. Later, she took me to Glide and I took her to Delancey; that's where our love for this city bloomed alongside our love for each other.

San Francisco is a small city of great heart, soul and spirit, in large part because Delancey Street and Glide Church inspire others to do what they do on levels big and small.

Robin Williams says he loves San Francisco because, "It's a combination of the mountains, the ocean-all that. And the people. It's a strange and eclectic place. I don't stand out here-[there are] enough strange people." Funny. But to me, this also means there are people who have his generosity and kindness.

Somehow, the people here know how to avoid the jagged ambition that dominates other places.

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