

# LIBRARY

*Open to All Possibilities*

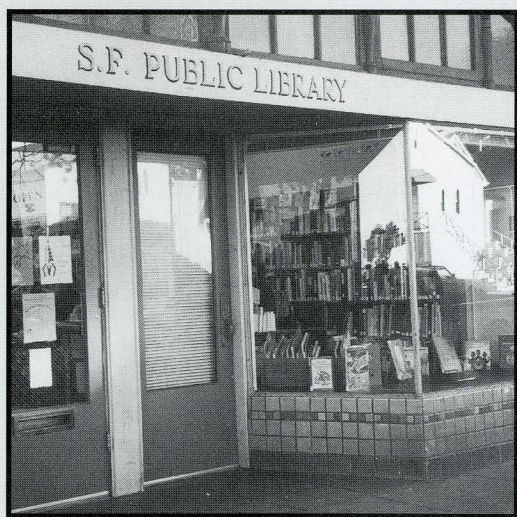
F R I E N D S & F O U N D A T I O N

A Publication of the Friends & Foundation  
of the San Francisco Public Library

AUTUMN 1999

## THE LITTLE LIBRARY THAT COULD

“**T**he little library that could” – the tiny branch that has endured nearly 100 years of inadequate funds and insufficient space – is finally getting a permanent home. Thanks to dedicated professionals and loyal patrons who believe in their library, the new Ocean View Branch will be a reality for the 21st century!



The storefront library at 111 Broad Street.

“This is one of the most important and positive steps to be taken in the Ocean View in more than 40 years,” says Royce Vaughn, president of the Ocean View Merced Ingleside (OMI) Business League.

According to Dr. Willis Kirk, chairperson of the community-based New Ocean View Library

Development Committee, “The new library is a giant step in rejuvenating the neighborhood. We are asking people throughout the City to help us engineer changes that will help our children and revitalize (Ocean View’s) commercial district.”

Considerable support has already come from City Hall in the form of a \$1.7 million construction fund

pledged by Mayor Willie Brown last year. Mr. Vaughn and Dr. Kirk were among the coalition of OMI community leaders and librarians who met with Mayor Brown at one of his lively Saturday morning sessions in late 1998.

“It didn’t take long to get his attention,” says Mr. Vaughn. “We just asked him how we were going to keep our kids off drugs and the streets. How were we going to cajole

them into the library if we didn’t have one for them to use?”

The mayor was particularly impressed by the group’s tenacity and their willingness to tackle a major part of the fundraising effort.

“He was right on target,” says Will Reno, a longtime Ocean View businessman who was also part of

the successful meeting with the mayor. “He told us that he agreed with our cause and he just laid it out, plain and simple: ‘You will get your library during my administration!’ He was just great.”

Mayor Brown has proved true to his word and the walls of the new library are going up right now, and the library is scheduled to be completed by Spring, 2000.

However, the hardest work is only just beginning. The neighborhood fundraising committee and the Friends & Foundation of the Library are currently raising additional money to furnish the new library with computers, bookshelves for expanding collections and important interior improvements. The goal is \$267,000.

“You know, this really is a wonderful cause,” says Darcus Thomas, who served as Ocean View Branch Manager from 1994 to 1997. “The old site was so cramped and far too small to accommodate all the needs of this kind of a community.” Ocean View is a very mixed neighborhood with a diverse population, in need of multi-language books and videos and a broad range of children’s materials.

“We have all kinds of people out here,” says Mrs. Thomas. “We want to build a place where they can all be

*continued on page 6*



## ~THE STORY OF OCEAN VIEW~

Where is Ocean View? This is a question that has been asked by many people over the past few months. Some of these people are natives of the City and yet, while it sounds familiar, the Ocean View neighborhood means nothing to them. No picture immediately comes to mind. There are no distinguishing landmarks like Coit Tower, Mission Dolores, or Telegraph Hill to help place this area. But, the story of Ocean View is one worth telling. It has a history and a spirit of community that can inspire all San Franciscans.

Located to the south, Ocean View is nestled between Merced Heights and Ingleside. In its earliest years, it was a thriving neighborhood with its own railroad station. As early as 1867, this area was targeted for development, but plans did not go into effect until after the 1906 earthquake. Under the Railroad Homestead Association, houses were built along Harold Street. This area was known for its distinct topography, a large ridge with three peaks which gave Ocean View its name and earliest identity.



By the time the first houses were built, the San Francisco Public Library had already established a branch in this growing area. Mr. and Mrs. Beman and later Mrs. Holden were the first branch librarians. The small library was located at the corner of Capitol and Broad Street, not far from the current library at 111 Broad Street. The railroad station provided a constant influx of people and provided access to other parts of the City. Stores and homes dotted Plymouth, Capitol and Broad Streets. Ocean View was a city within a city.

From the 1930's to the mid 1950's, Ocean View was predominantly an Italian community with delis, shops, and a fire station. Ocean View Park, a recreation park, provided entertainment for the many families living in the area.

In the 1950's and 1960's redevelopment began to take place along Fillmore and Geary Streets in the Western Addition. Many African American owned businesses were closed on Fillmore and families were encouraged to relocate to Ocean View.

The overall effect that this critical development had on the African American community was one of displacement. It took many years for Ocean View to become "the neighborhood" and many people would travel back and forth to the Fillmore, as the Western Addition was known, to work and attend church.

More recently, Ocean View has fallen on hard times. The recession in the 1970's and then again, in the early 1990's caused many businesses to close. Ocean View has known the ravages of crime, drugs and low educational achievement. This picture of the area, however, is slowly changing, because of dedicated neighbors and friends who have never given up on their neighborhood.

In 1998, concerned residents banded together to form the New Ocean View Library Development Committee which managed to put their community and their dearly loved, but woefully inadequate, branch library "on the map." The committee succeeded in getting the City of San Francisco to recognize the needs of this neighborhood and their desire for a library worthy of the new millennium. In Spring 2000, Ocean View will have a brand new "center of learning and empowerment."

The history of Ocean View and its library is a lesson in neighborhood change and growth. Each day, as this library starts to take shape, a dream becomes reality, and the persistence of people who care is rewarded.

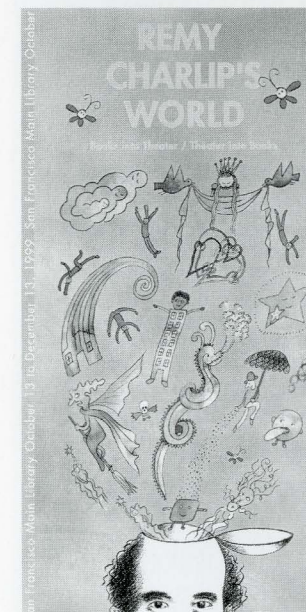
"Our community is dedicated to building a first-rate library for the youth of Ocean View. I applaud the fundraising efforts of the neighborhood committee and the Friends & Foundation of the Library, and encourage San Franciscans to give generously to this worthy cause. Remember, educational opportunities are the key to the future."

Mayor Willie Brown, Honorary Chair, Campaign for the New Ocean View Library



## REMY CHARLIP'S WORLD

OPENS OCTOBER 13 AT THE LIBRARY



"What you learn doing art or being creative is that by putting two things together you get something new," says Remy Charlip, children's author and artist. "When you put your whole self into a song, a dance, a drawing, painting or sculpture, and make things with your own hands and body, you have an experience that affects every aspect of your life."

Welcome to Remy Charlip's World, where children's fantasies come to life through words, song, dance and art. Beginning in September, Remy Charlip, creator of 29 children's books and an innovative performer, leads a series of book and mural making playshops for children ages 6 - 11 years. The playshops take place at different branch

libraries, and are part of *Remy Charlip's World: Books into Theater/Theater into Books*, a major children's exhibit sponsored by the Friends & Foundation of the Library.

Remy's exhibit, which will include artwork produced at the playshops and illustrations from his book, opens in the Jewett Gallery at the Main Library on October 13 and runs through December 13.

Please join us for the opening reception and book signing on Wednesday, October 13. A performance by Remy and children from the San Francisco Arts Education Project takes place following the reception at 7 p.m. in the Koret Auditorium. All events are free and the public is invited to attend.

### The Main library - San Francisco's Most Novel Event Space

Private dinners, holiday parties, corporate receptions in the Library? Absolutely!

The Main Library is fast becoming one of San Francisco's premier event spaces.

Seven unique spaces are available for private events when the building is closed to the public.

Rental fees are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law and are used to support a variety of library services.



## MEMBER PROFILE: WILL RENO

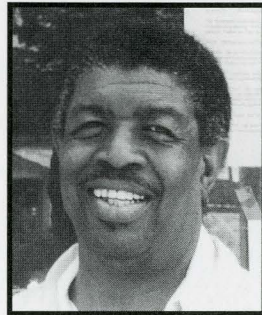
### *New Ocean View Library Development Committee*

Tucked away in the southernmost corner of San Francisco, is a little known city treasure. Will Reno, known to friends and admirers as the "Mayor of the Broad Street," is a tireless activist dedicated to preserving a small town feeling in the middle of a bustling metropolitan city.

Originally from Kentucky, Will came to San Francisco with the Navy in 1960. He loved it, especially the Ocean View neighborhood where he found "temporary" housing. After over 30 years here, he says, "It feels like I've been here my whole life. The Ocean View is my family."

Will owns and operates a barber shop on Broad Street. With no children of his own, Will devotes most of his spare time to the families of his adopted neighborhood, working to improve the quality of life. He sponsors an annual summer picnic to Santa Cruz for a group of grandmothers and single moms and their kids. As president of the Southwest Neighborhood Improvement Group (SNIG), he was instrumental in establishing a community center that is used for just about every major event in the neighborhood. It was recently the site

of a benefit to raise money for the new Ocean View Library, a cause that has always been close to Will Reno's heart.



Will Reno

He served as chairman of the committee that fought a move to shut down the library in the early 70's. Later, he organized a group that secured much needed improvements to the current site. Will was also among the community leaders who convinced Mayor Brown to fund the building of the new branch library. Now, he sits on the New Ocean View Library Development Committee, determined to raise the money and

the consciousness needed to establish a first rate library in his community.

"The children need a safe place to go," he says. "I'm going to see to it that they get it."

## LIBRARY STAFF PROFILE: DOROTHY COAKLEY

### *Ocean View Branch Library*

"Alive" is the word that Dorothy Coakley, Branch Librarian for Ocean View, uses to describe herself. She is alive with passion for learning and the desire to help others learn. She is alive in her passion for creating a great education center for the people of Ocean View.

An East Bay native, Dorothy attended the University of California, Berkeley with the intention of being a law librarian. Perhaps it's her energy, but before she knew it, she was working with kids and their parents in the under-served communities of San Francisco.



Dorothy Coakley

For 14 years, Dorothy was the beloved children's librarian of the Bernal Heights Library. Now branch manager of the smallest library in the system, in one of the more deprived neighborhoods in the City, Dorothy is still full of that same special energy and passion for learning.

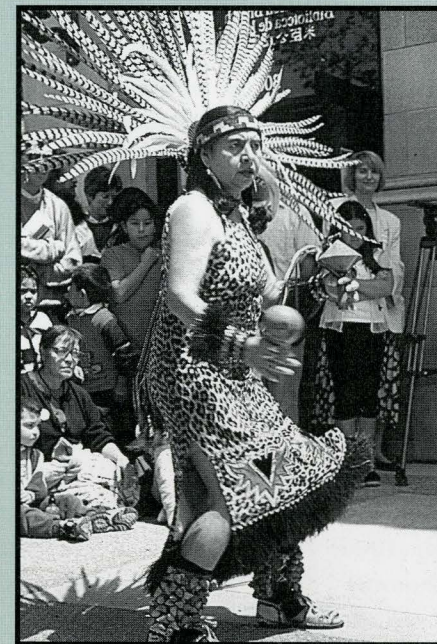
Each day as she walks to the tiny library on Broad Street she sees what effect crime and drugs have had on the Ocean View neighborhood. But forever the consummate believer in humanity, Dorothy looks forward to the many challenges that lie ahead.

"Once the new library opens, we'll be able to have school class visits with enough chairs for everyone, she says enthusiastically. "Our teenagers will be able to take computer training and older patrons will have a safe, accessible building right across the street from the senior center."

Dorothy wants to offer more children's activities and get teens involved in a mentoring program to keep them in school and provide them with job opportunities. She also wants to organize a support group for the many immigrants in the neighborhood to help them adjust to their new home.

"The time has finally arrived when Ocean View will get a real up-to-date, state-of-the-art branch that will accommodate the many interests and talents of the people in the neighborhood."

## MISSION LIBRARY UPDATE



Aztec Dancers from Danza Xitalli Troupe

The celebrations of May have ended. The dancers and musicians are gone. The decorations have been put away. The celebrities and city officials have all gone home. But it is far from quiet at the Mission Branch library. Its doors are open and business is thriving.

After a highly successful fundraising campaign headed by the Friends & Foundation and community leaders that raised over \$380,000, the necessary seismic upgrading and renovation was completed last spring.

The Grand Reopening took place on May 8 with a festive day of music and dancing, poetry and songs, and speeches and dedications. But the real excitement seems to have begun only after the big party ended. The library is "the action" in the Mission.

"The public just loves it!" according to Branch Manager Gloria Hanson. "It's so nice and airy now."

She says circulation and attendance rocketed immediately upon reopening the permanent site at 24th Street and Bartlett.

"The computers are always full," says Ms. Hanson. "In one eight hour day, 96 people had signed up to use the Internet and the word processing programs."

The librarian says that a few neighborhood residents who have computer expertise "have been a godsend" volunteering to assist both patrons and staff on the new computers. She says one young man who recently moved here from England has "energy plus" and comes in to help out three days a week.

The teen and children's departments have experienced the highest increase in patronage. Martha Neves, the Mission Branch teen librarian, says Mission teenagers have come to the library in record numbers to attend several special programs offered this summer, including the most successful event, "How to Find a Job" Day.

The Children's Room continues to overflow. About 700 youngsters participated in the Summer Reading program, and over 20 class visits were scheduled through June and July.

Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the Mission Library is once again the heart of the Mission.



Jing Mo Lion Dancers



THE LITTLE LIBRARY THAT COULD *continued from page 1*

together and really use their library. We need computers and a children's room to give the kids a place, away from the streets."

Mrs. Thomas, a longtime resident of the Ocean View neighborhood, now volunteers as a librarian for one of the local elementary schools. She is particularly encouraged by the overwhelming interest that the effort has received so far, including a recent article by Ken Garcia of *The Chronicle*.

"I just hope we can keep the energy going," says Mrs. Thomas. "This neighborhood has waited a long time for something new to be built here. It is going to be a beautiful

library with something for everyone." She says the fundraising committee is reaching outside of the neighborhood and into the San Francisco community to raise money to furnish the new building.

Dr. Willis Kirk feels the new library will not only enhance the neighborhood but it could change the area dramatically. "Until now, the Ocean View was practically invisible to the rest of San Francisco," he says. "This library is really going to put a lot of life into this community!"

Our sincere apologies to the following individuals for incorrectly spelling or omitting their names in the Summer 1999 issue.

Dorothy Harkavy  
Dr. Willis Kirk

Dr. Francis Rigney  
Ken Romines

Sharon Saslafsky  
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*The Friends & Foundation is currently combining membership and donor database information.*

*We are working very hard to resolve problems that have cropped up as a result of this process.*

*We apologize for any duplicate mailings you may have received. If you are receiving duplicates, please call us at 557-4260.*

*Thank you for your patience as we smooth out the wrinkles.*

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