

SWELLS

Sunday, September 25, 2005



Mother & son: San Francisco, and City Hall, provided the perfect setting for a book party celebrating the release of "Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms Are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men" (Rodale Books) by Peggy Drexler, a Ph.D. and assistant professor of psychology in psychiatry at Cornell University.

Amid potted palms and antique furniture atop a red carpet, the grand marble space of the Rotunda was transformed into an elegant salon for the night.

"There are 10 million single mothers in the United States. This is not a question of human relations but one of demographics," said Drexler. "Some men feel I'm saying they are not needed in the parental relationship. But I am diametrically opposed to that notion. We don't necessarily need men in the mother's bed, but we do need them as role models for young boys.

"We are not a nation of 'Ozzy and Harriet'; and San Francisco appreciates and understands that."

Not surprisingly, Drexler's book has kicked up a bit of dust among the more red-hued states in the union. But surrounded by old friends, in the birthplace of the "Winter of Love," Drexler (who now lives in New York) was more than at home.

A Dan McCall dinner buffet fed the 200 or so guests. And the Stanlee Gatti-designed space fed the soul. "Peggy's book is all about home, family and children. And I wanted to create a space that not only looks like home but feels like home, too," said Gatti.

So sublime was the setting (rented out by the Drexlers, to the benefit of both the city and their guests) that many lingered long into the night.

In the crowd: Mickey Drexler, Peggy's husband and J.Crew pooh-bah; SFMOMA Director Neal Benezra; Mimi and Peter Haas; Marjorie and Barry Traub; Cathy and Ned Topham; Helen Hilton Raiser; Cissie Swig; Denise Hale; Carl Djerassi; Eleanor Johns; and Ann Caen and Ebersole Gaines.

Drexler was intro'd by District Attorney Kamala Harris and received a mayoral proclamation from Mayor Gavin Newsom, whom she had yet to meet. "But as a champion of nontraditional families, he's already a hero of mine." When the mayor returned from another event, it was a mutual-admiration society.

"Being dyslexic and having a single mom were the two greatest and most empowering things that ever happened to me," said Newsom. "The strong females in my life inspired me to appoint women to critical and high-level, though traditionally male, posts in my administration. That's just how I grew up."

Praising Drexler's research and writing, the mayor was also relieved: "I'm glad there is now a book that vindicates me!"

Coming to a theater near you: Documentarian and actor Geoff Callan just finished two big-screen jobs ("Pursuit of Happyness" and the Zodiac movie) being shot in the city.

"I've also done two national ads. That's how I'm going to finance this documentary ("Pursuit of Equality") -- by acting!"

In "Happyness," Callan plays an '80s-era, duded-up stockbroker (three-piece suit, pocket watch, Ferrari) who catches the eye of the character played by actor Will Smith.

The movie is based on the life of Chris Gardner, a real-life San Francisco story of rags to riches, and Callan said his character inspired the down-on-his-luck Gardner to change his life.

"The story goes Gardner was pulling out of a parking spot when he noticed the broker's fancy wheels. He said to the broker, 'I'll give you my space if I can ask you two questions: What do you do? And how can I do that?' "

In "Chronicles" (directed by San Anselmo native David Fincher, and starring Mark Ruffalo and Anthony Edwards), Callan plays SFPD Officer Zelms.

"As a local actor, it's an honor to have worked in both films," said Callan. "It was also great to see old Chronicle delivery trucks . Back in the day, in search of cabs at 2 in the morning, we'd try and flag one down. So long as we promised to throw some papers out along the route, we'd sometimes get a ride in the back."

Getty a go-go: Taking leave of his host, absorbed in the glorious sounds emanating from the speakers in the Getty manse's music room, Bill Prezant teased his pal Gordon Getty, "Is the Grateful Dead up next?" Not quite. But it was a rollicking good time when Ann Getty hosted a party for "Young America," a collection of Gordon's choral works performed by the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus (conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas) and the Russian National Orchestra.

An ice-sculpture bust of Getty sat in the middle of a buffet table where guests feasted on a delectable repast by Getty chef Jennifer Johnson, amid the Gatti-designed splendor, reminiscent of a Venetian drawing room. Knowing the score: playwright Edna O'Brien; UC Berkeley philosopher John Searle and his wife, Dagmar; Pam and Richard Glogau; Gretchen DeWitt; Mike Smith; Maria Manetti Farrow; Eileen and Brian Burns; Ann's brother, Bill Gilbert, his wife, Nancy, and their daughter, Beth Townsend.

A scholarly looking gent, Thomas Benet, introduced himself as "the son of a forgotten poet." For some, Stephen Vincent Benet is still well remembered and well read. Now, he's well sung on Gordon's CD.

"Gordon used four lines from a poem by my father," said Benet, formerly The Chronicle's long-reigning Editorial Page editor. "I'm delighted by that."

Mesmerized music fans lounged on the Nureyev couch, as Gordon punched the air with his hands, enthusing to the symphony's nuances, "Get a load of this!

"I pulled the title out of thin air," said Getty. "But it's a tribute to vignettes in the history of America. One song includes verse from a Welsh poem whose words are comical and crazy. Then I made them more so."

Laughing, Getty added: "I bend the hell out of the rules."

Gordon Getty, composer. Gordon Getty, rock star.

Luck of the Irish: Mayor Newsom charmed the natives of Ireland on his first (official) international sortie, hosted by the San Francisco/Cork Sister City Committee and led by the committee's Diarmuid Philpott and John Moylan.

From Dublin to Cork, the trip has been a success of cultural exchange, in addition to yielding clues about the Irish heritage of the Newsoms of San Francisco.

Historian and American Ireland Fund member Ted Murphy discovered the Newsoms of Cork were successful coffee and tea merchants.

And politics has long been mother's milk to this clan -- Newsom is a direct descendent of Edward Newsom, who served as lord mayor of Cork in 1822.

Murphy (an author who also runs the International Museum of Wine at Desmond Castle in Kinsale, a renowned foodie haven) is the founder of the Fund's Wine Geese Society, which honors Irish families (such as Hennessy, Murphy-Goode), who fled in the 1600s, later attaining fame in the international wine trade. Joining his brethren of the vine, Newsom presented the museum with a bottle of his PlumpJack Cabernet 2002 Reserve.

The mayor hosted Cork dignitaries at the Imperial Hotel where the singing of old Irish songs, late into the night, also included members of a local chorus: Mayoral Chief of Staff Steve Kawa; City Controller Ed Harrington; Supervisor Sean Elsbernd; Art Commission president P.J. Johnston and his wife, Karen; Tony Guilfoyle; Father Mike Healy, pastor of St. Bartholomew's Church in San Mateo, SFPD chaplain and a Cork native; and Matthew Goudeau, director of the Mayor's Office of Protocol.

Another American Ireland Fund supporter, Maryon Davies Lewis, organized a reception at the Lewis Glucksman Gallery (currently Ireland's hippest, happening art space on the campus of University College Cork), which was hosted by Lewis Glucksman, a board member of the fund.

At Cork's Scoil Padre Pio Boys' Primary, the tug of memory and the arduous, watery exile for millions of Irish across James Joyce's "bowl of bitter tears," mingled together on another chorus of song. The 6-foot-4 mayor was received by a line of 50 pint-sized, uniformed students who greeted him with a polite handshake and heartfelt, "Nice to meet you, sir."

They serenaded Newsom with "Green Mossy Banks of the Lea," a traditional tune in honor of Cork's River Lee. Then those little Irish brogues tunefully segued into something slightly more modern for this descendent of Irish emigrants: "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair)."

Erin go bragh, sweetie!

PHOTOS:

(1) Our gal in New York: CourtTV fan Carmen Electra (left) with CourtTV anchor Kimberly Guilfoyle Newsom during a recent visit to the station. Guilfoyle Newsom arrives home for This Old Bag (Oct. 7, Clift Hotel), a purse auction benefiting the Breast Cancer Emergency Fund.

/ Photo by Michael Simon / Startracks Photo

(2-9) Getty a go-go: 1 A facsimile of "Young America," a new recording featuring choral compositions by Gordon Getty, hangs over the foyer at the Getty home. 2 Maestro Michael Tilson Thomas (left), who conducted the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus for the recording, with Getty. 3 Soprano Lisa Delan is a featured singer on the CD. 4 Guests gathered in the music room, where "Young America" played from a precision sound system. 5 Getty signs a copy of his CD for Colin Murdoch, president of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. 6 PlumpJack exec Hilary Newsom Callan (left) and "Beach Blanket Babylon" producer Jo Schuman Silver. 7 Tosca Cafe owner Jeannette Etheredge with Chris Gardner, whose life story is being filmed for a movie titled "Pursuit of Happyness." 8 Kathleen Sullivan Alioto (left) and her daughter, Domenica Alioto.

/ Photos by Thomas J. Gibbons / Special to The Chronicle

(10-21) Mother and son: 1 Author and researcher Peggy Drexler on the steps of the rotunda of City Hall, where a party celebrated the release of her new book, "Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms Are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men." 2 Da mayors (from left): Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and former Mayor Willie Brown. 3 District Attorney Kamala Harris (left) delivered the introduction for the evening's festivities, with Tom Kelley and Lisa Pritzker. 4 Ann Gust (on the campaign trail now with her husband, Mayor Jerry Brown) and Paul Pelosi. 5 The Stanlee Gatti salon-style decor in City Hall. 6 Mayoral Chief of Staff Steve Kawa (left) and his partner, Dan Henkle. 7 Peggy Drexler, with her husband, Mickey, chief exec of J.Crew. 8 Daniel Lurie and his mom, Mimi Haas.

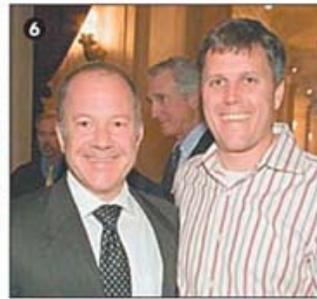
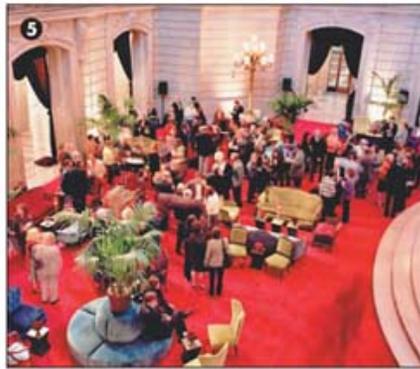
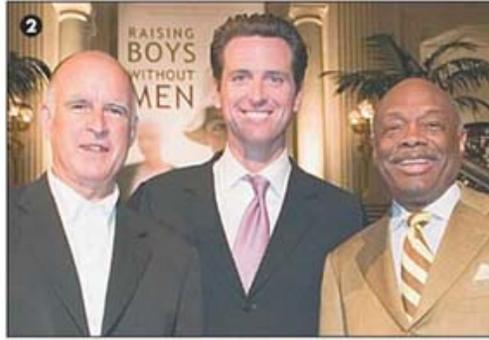
9 Gerry Belling (left) and Elaine McKeon. 0 Event designer Stanlee Gatti. Emily Morse and Dorka Keehn. Susan Denny (left) and Cathy Topham.

/ Photos by Drew Altizer / Special to The Chronicle

E-mail Catherine Bigelow at cbigelow@sfchronicle.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/09/25/LVG0UERHV31.DTL>

This article appeared on page M - 6 of the San Francisco Chronicle



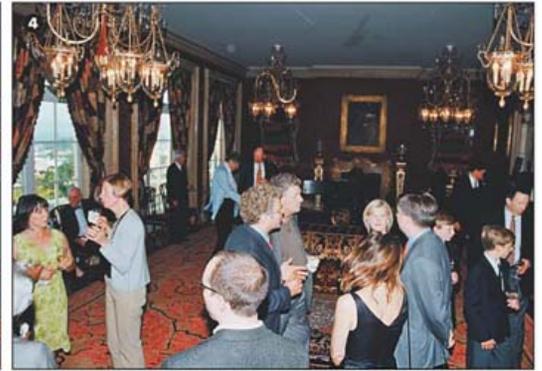
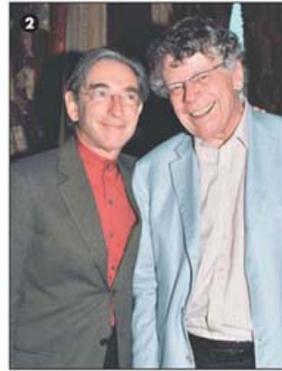
Mother and son: ❶ Author and researcher Peggy Drexler on the steps of the rotunda of City Hall, where a party celebrated the release of her new book, "Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms Are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men." ❷ Da mayors (from left): Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and former Mayor Willie Brown. ❸ District Attorney Kamala Harris (left) delivered the introduction for the evening's festivities, with Tom Kelley and Lisa Pritzker. ❹ Ann Gust (on the campaign trail now with her husband, Mayor Jerry Brown) and Paul Pelosi. ❺ The Stanlee Gatti salon-style decor in City Hall. ❻ Mayoral Chief of Staff Steve Kawa (left) and his partner, Dan Henkle. ❼ Peggy Drexler, with her husband, Mickey, chief exec of J.Crew. ❽ Daniel Lurie and his mom, Mimi Haas. ❾ Gerry Belling (left) and Elaine McKeon. ❿ Event designer Stanlee Gatti. ⓫ Emily Morse and Dorka Keehn. ⓬ Susan Denny (left) and Cathy Topham.

Photos by DREW ALTIZER / Special to The Chronicle



MICHAEL SIMON / Startracks Photo

Our gal in New York: CourtTV fan Carmen Electra (left) with CourtTV anchor Kimberly Guilfoyle Newsom during a recent visit to the station. Guilfoyle Newsom arrives home for This Old Bag (Oct. 7, Clift Hotel), a purse auction benefiting the Breast Cancer Emergency Fund.



Photos by THOMAS J. GIBBOSS / Special to The Chronicle

Getty a go-go: ❶ A facsimile of "Young America," a new recording featuring choral compositions by Gordon Getty, hangs over the foyer at the Getty home. ❷ Maestro Michael Tilson Thomas (left), who conducted the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus for the recording, with Getty. ❸ Soprano Lisa Delan is a featured singer on the CD. ❹ Guests gathered in the music room, where "Young America" played from a precision sound system. ❺ Getty signs a copy of his CD for Colin Murdoch, president of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. ❻ PlumpJack exec Hilary Newsom Callan (left) and "Beach Blanket Babylon" producer Jo Schuman Silver. ❼ Tosca Cafe owner Jeannette Etheredge with Chris Gardner, whose life story is being filmed for a movie titled "Pursuit of Happiness." ❽ Kathleen Sullivan Alioto (left) and her daughter, Domenica Alioto.