



# Legacy Business Registry Staff Report

HEARING DATE AUGUST 8, 2016

## SPECS' TWELVE ADLER MUSEUM CAFÉ

*Nomination Date:* March 14, 2016  
*Application No.:* LBR-2015-16-020  
*Business Name:* Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café  
*Business Address:* 12 Williams Place/Saroyan Alley  
*District:* District 3  
*Applicant:* Elly & Richard Simmons, Owners  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin  
*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café is a neighborhood bar and museum serving the North Beach neighborhood on Williams Place/Saroyan Alley off of Columbus Avenue. It is located at the basement floor. The bar was founded in 1968 by Elly and Richard "Specs" Simmons originally as a union bar (Local 2) that has transformed over time and become one of North Beach's most storied bars and is also one of San Francisco's oddest little museums, housing a truly bizarre collection of ephemera.

### CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in SF for 30 or more years, with no break in SF operations exceeding two years?

Yes, the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years:

12 Adler Place (now Williams Place/Saroyan Alley) from 1968-Present (48 years)

### CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes, the applicant has contributed to the North Beach neighborhood's history and identity.

The Historic Preservation Commission recommended the applicant as qualifying, noting the following ways the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community:

- The business is unique to San Francisco in the integral role it played and continues to play in the bohemian nature of the North Beach neighborhood as well as the idea that the bar itself is comprised of the collections of objects that make it a museum. These collections include, but are not limited to, Inuit and Haida art, San Francisco historical photographs and antiques, World War II and Spanish Civil War posters, whaling history antiques, and flags brought from all over the world by merchant marines.



SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION

MARK DWIGHT, PRESIDENT  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

- The 1911 property at 12 Williams Place has been previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance. The property is considered a "Category A Property" for its association with LGBT history as one of two lesbian-owned bars in the 1950s, prior to the establishment of Spec's Twelve Adler Place Museum Café. The two lesbian-owned bars were named Tommy's Place (529 Broadway) and 12 Adler Place.
- The business has been cited in the following publications:
  - The Examiner, 8/19/2003, "Spec's illustrious 75th," by Warren Hinckle.
  - Heyday, 11/19/2015, "Q & A with 'High Spirits' author J. K. Dineen" by Mariko Conner.
  - San Francisco's Best Dive Bars: Drinking and Diving in the City by the Bay, 2004, Spec's, by Todd Dayton
  - San Francisco Chronicle, "Viewing 'Life' in Real Barroon," by Gerald Nachman.

**CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?**

Yes, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends that Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- Museum collection objects including art, flags, etc.
- Brick walls that are of the original brick of the building, which was built in 1855 and rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake
- Bar
- Entry door
- Projecting business sign above entry

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Small Business Commission include Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café currently located at 12 Williams Place/Saroyan Alley in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.

Richard Kurylo, Manager  
Legacy Business Program



SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER / SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION  
1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 110, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681  
Small Business Assistance Center (415) 554-6134 / Small Business Commission (415) 554-6481



# San Francisco Small Business Commission Draft Resolution

HEARING DATE AUGUST 8, 2016

## SPECS' TWELVE ADLER MUSEUM CAFÉ

LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

*Nomination Date:* March 14, 2016  
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*Staff Contact:* Richard Kurylo  
legacybusiness@sfgov.org

### ADOPTING FINDINGS APPROVING THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY APPLICATION FOR SPECS' TWELVE ADLER MUSEUM CAFÉ, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 12 WILLIAMS PLACE/SAROYAN ALLEY.

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

**WHEREAS**, at a duly noticed public hearing held on August 8, 2016, the San Francisco Small Business Commission reviewed documents and correspondence, and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry application; therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the San Francisco Small Business Commission hereby includes Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café in the Legacy Business Registry as a Legacy Business under Administrative Code Section 2A.242.



SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION

MARK DWIGHT, PRESIDENT  
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

EDWIN M. LEE, MAYOR

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the San Francisco Small Business Commission recommends safeguarding the below listed physical features and traditions at Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café:

***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business***

- *Museum collection objects including art, flags, etc.*
- *Brick walls that are of the original brick of the building, which was built in 1855 and rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake*
- *Bar entry door*
- *Projecting business sign above entry*

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Small Business Commission on August 8, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Director

**RESOLUTION NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ayes –**  
**Nays –**  
**Abstained –**  
**Absent –**



SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER / SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION  
1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE, ROOM 110, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-4681  
Small Business Assistance Center (415) 554-6134 / Small Business Commission (415) 554-6481

Member, Board of Supervisors  
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

**AARON PESKIN**  
佩斯金 市參事

March 14, 2016

Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
San Francisco Office of Small Business  
City Hall, Room 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
[regina.dick-endrizzi@sfgov.org](mailto:regina.dick-endrizzi@sfgov.org)

Dear Director Dick-Endrizzi:

It is my honor and privilege to nominate Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Cafe for inclusion on the Legacy Business Registry.

Founded in 1968, Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café has become a cornerstone of North Beach history, in all of its gritty and fantastical charm. The setting for stories featuring countless poets, longshoremen, merchants and misfits from all corners of the globe, Specs' has played a rich role in shaping the character of the Bay Area. Not only is it one of North Beach's most storied bars, it's also one of San Francisco's oddest little museums, housing a truly bizarre collection of ephemera. It is no surprise, then, that it continues to be a destination for San Francisco's literary and cultural elite and for wanderers from across the globe in search of our City's magical eccentricity.

I hope for the continued success of Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Cafe. It is a critical part of the cultural heritage of North Beach, District 3 and, indeed, of San Francisco.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron Peskin

APPLICATION FOR

# Legacy Business Registration

## 1. Current Owner / Applicant Information

NAME OF BUSINESS SPELLS' 12 ADLER MUSEUM CAFE		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business) ELLY SIMMONS/ RICHARD SIMMONS		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS 12 SAROYAN ALLEY next to 250 COLUMBUS	TELEPHONE (415) 421-4112	5pm - 2am
	EMAIL ellysimmons@icloud.com	
WEBSITE N/A	FACEBOOK PAGE N/A	YELP PAGE N/A

APPLICANT'S NAME ELLY SIMMONS (HELEN D.) / RICHARD SIMMONS		€ Same as Business Owner
APPLICANT'S TITLE OWNER / OWNER		
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS 279 COLUMBUS #4 San Francisco CA 94133 + Box 463-36 SPRING - LAGUNITAS CA 94938	TELEPHONE (415) 497-8004	ellysimmons@icloud.com
	EMAIL ellysimmons@icloud.com	
SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER 48040-01	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTRY NUMBER (if applicable) 191-1208-5	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
Founding Location:	12 Adler Place (now SAROYAN ALLEY)
Current Headquarters Location:	Same
Operating in San Francisco since:	APRIL 26-1968
NAME OF NOMINATOR Aaron Feskin	DATE OF NOMINATION

## 2. Business Addresses

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS 12 ADLER PLACE SF CA	ZIP CODE 94133	DATES OF OPERATION APRIL 26-1968 TO PRESENT
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING AND/OR HEADQUARTERED LOCATION? (check all that apply)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Founding Location	and	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Current Headquarters

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION:
OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION:
OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION:
OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION:

**3. Eligibility Criteria**

Attach the business's historical narrative.

**4. San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws, and Public Information Release**

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.

ELLY SIMMONS (Helen D.)      2/5/2016      Elly Simmons

Name (Print):

Date:

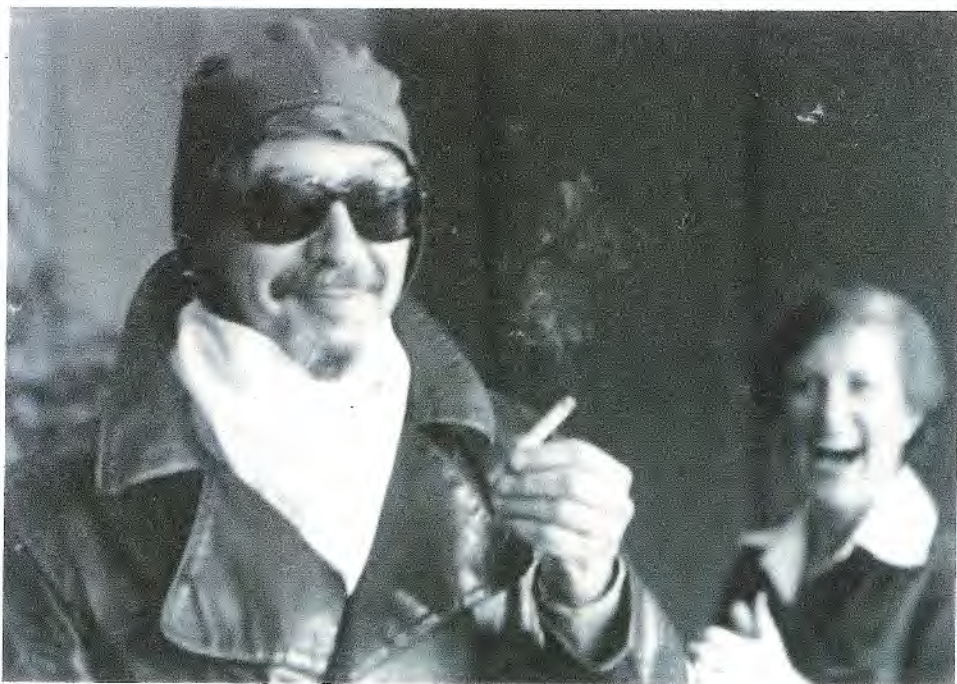
Signature:



SPECS

12 Adler Place, 1977

**SHIGSPEER PRESS**  
1367 GRANT AVE.  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133



THE PROPRIETOR





PLEASE PUT YOUR SUITS IN THE TUB.

COME Festival SAN FRANCISCO

JOHN & MARY'S



From: "Elly Simmons" <ellysimmons@saber.net>  
Subject: Legacy Business Application  
Date: Wed, March 16, 2016 2:07 pm  
To: info@ellysimmons.com

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Section One:

Owners:

Richard Edward Simmons

Elly D'vorah Simmons

Maralisa Elena Simmons-Cook

Applicant:

Elly Simmons  
Owner/Vice President of the Board of Directors  
415 497-8004  
ellysimmons@icloud.com

San Francisco Business Account:  
Tax ID 48140-01  
Corporation MNumber 1081447  
State I.D. 191-1208  
ABC 48-1111874

Section Two:

Founding Location of the Business

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café  
12 Adler Place (now 12 Saroyan Alley)  
next to 250 Columbus Avenue in San Francisco's North Beach.  
San Francisco, California 94133

Business phone: 415 421-4112

Opening on April 26, 1968, Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café has remained in business in the same location, with the same owner since the founding day of April 26, 1968, until now, March 16, 2015, without change in venue or ownership.

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café opened on the birthday of the co-owner, Sonia Simmons, wife of Richard Simmons, whose famous portrait remains on the back wall, painted by North Beach artist Bill Weber. Each year, Specs' hosts a huge anniversary party on the last Sunday of April, celebrating the continuity of its' existence. Hosted by the owner, the Specs' regulars cook for days and hundreds are fed.

## Section Three:

## Eligibility Criteria:

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café is a historic tavern in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco. Specs' 12 Adler Place Museum Café, at 12 Saroyan Alley, in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, has operated continually for 48 years this April, in the same location, with the same owner, Richard (Specs) Simmons, and his family since the day the bar opened on April 26, 1968.

As illustrated in the following description, Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café has contributed to the unique, colorful, and bohemian nature of the internationally visited and celebrated North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco for almost five decades, drawing a large constituency of locals from the neighborhood, of visiting international travelers, business people from downtown and locals from all over the Bay Area, who have frequented Specs' tavern for decades. Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café is located on Columbus Avenue between Broadway and Kearny, directly across the street from Vesuvio Café, where Richard (Specs) Simmons worked in the early 1950's upon coming to San Francisco, and across from the celebrated City Lights Bookstore. After readings at City Lights, the authors and publishers come to Specs to celebrate and relax and often host readings at Specs as well. Specs is in between the beloved Tosca Café and the new establishment, Devils' Acres, previously Jazz at Pearls, and the Greek Taverna before that.

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe is an integral part of the North Beach neighborhood and is frequented by local business owners, cafe and bar workers, world travelers, and regulars from all over the Bay Area, who come to Specs' regularly, noting the sense of hospitality, comfort, humor and companionship they feel as soon as entering the door. Many remark, that even after not visiting Specs for years, when they walk in the door, it feels the same, the décor remains largely the same and the bartenders and many of the regulars have been there for decades. For many returning from a voyage abroad, Specs is the first place they visit when they return home, for it is "home" to so many, their "living room," in fact, where they can settle back into home, visiting with old friends and recounting adventures and life experiences.

Over the decades, Specs' has kept its' sense of sameness, the essential qualities of the institution have not changed much over time, reflecting the soul and spirit, values, concerns for and caring for the community that was created by Specs Simmons himself from the day of the bars' inception in 1968, carefully created and nurtured over the years.

Specs' has maintained, and is committed to maintaining and preserving the singular physical features and traditions that have defined its' unique and widely celebrated presence in the North Beach community in which it resides.

The physical characteristics, widely documented by many of the regulars, define the museum nature of the institution and are an integral part of the feel of the tavern. This will not change, although objects are slowly rotated over time, all from the collection of the owner.

The music that is played in Specs' 12 Adler, from the owner's collection mix tapes, also define the spirit of the institution. Drawing from jazz, American Roots music, country, blues and unique and obscure world music, carefully gathered by the owner over decades, these pieces are still played by current day bartenders and set the tone for the spirit of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café. This will be carried on by the family member co-owners and the bartenders, as this is integral to the spirit of the institution.

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café is one of the most beloved institutions in the neighborhood and is frequented by many of the local business owners, such as Janet Clyde, owner of Vesuvio Café, Al Ribabya, of Al's Attire, Tony Gimignani, of Tony's Pizza, and Teague Kirman of Tupelo. Many local and internationally celebrated musicians frequent Specs' 12 Adler Place, as well as writers and poets, and visual artists, carrying on the bohemian legacy of North Beach, and giving the institution much of its' flavor. Known musicians who have and continue to frequent Specs' include Kitty Margolis, Boz Scaggs, members of Australia's The Cat Empire, legendary Blues and Jazz musician Taj Mahal, the Boys of the Lough, Mike Lipskin, and even Thelonius Monk, in the past. Writers include our own Poet Laureate of the United States, Juan Felipe Herrera, San Francisco Poet Laureate Alejandro Murguia, Past Poet Laureate Jack Hirschman, Gary Kamiya, J.K. Dineen, Beat Poet Ruth Weiss, and many others.

Specs Simmons himself is spoken of as an institution, or a legendary figure in North Beach, beloved by all. His dry wit, humor, generosity of spirit and unbound knowledge of history, literature storytelling ability, and brilliance in the one-liner repartee, or banter, is infamous.

The visuals of Specs are widely celebrated and are what constitute the "museum" of the name of the historic institution itself, "Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café.", for the collection of objects is clearly worthy of the museum comparison. Many of the chatchkas on the walls, the Inuit and Haida art, the San Francisco historical photographs and antiques, the Second World War and Spanish Civil War posters, the whaling history antiquities and the flags brought in from all over the world by merchant marines were placed on the walls and ceilings in the early days of the establishment, in the late 1960's, and remain there to this day. While certain objects are rotated from the owners' collections, the essential nature and character of the establishment has remained to current day.

As San Francisco becomes more and more a high technology city, as well as the regulars who have frequented the establishment for years, Specs' has become popular with the young tech crowd, who come in and relax on the weekends, hold a lot of their office parties there, and can be seen photographing and posting the unique objects on the walls on their social media sites. The old time regulars do the same as well, as culture changes to a globally interconnected world. The essential nature of hosting international travelers has remained the same although the kinds of work that the travelers do has changed dramatically in the last ten years.

The walls of Specs' 12 Adler Place are the original brick of the building, which was built in 1855 and then rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake. Specs' 12 Adler is the basement floor of the building which currently holds a single room occupancy hotel as well as The Garden of Eden Club. Originally a Chinese Joss House, or prayer hall, the establishment has

housed a Norwegian Seaman's Union, a lesbian bar in the 1950's and an Italian Family Bar, run by Frank and Bessie Guidera, from whom Richard Simmons purchased the liquor license. All reflect changing times in the history of North Beach.

Specs' 12 Adler is committed to maintaining the integrity of its' original visual physical features, into the future. The physical features of Specs' define its' spirit and shall not change. Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café started as a union bar, Local 2, and also will continue with that tradition of taking care of its' employees. The bartenders at Specs' stay for decades, as it is a good place to work, carrying a strong sense of community, with good pay and benefits. Into the future, the family of Richard Simmons will continue owning and managing the tavern, carrying the same values of Richard Simmons. Elly Simmons, Richard's daughter, and Maralisa Simmons-Cook, his granddaughter, are co-owners and carry the same values and commitment to community as Specs' himself. The continuity of the spirit of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café is a given with it staying in the family, a family that values the original conception, creation, and continuity of spirit of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café.

With all the changes happening in San Francisco, people are losing a number of treasured local businesses to soaring rents and a changing spirit of the city. There is concern in the community as to the future of Specs' 12 Adler Place. It is a very beloved, popular and unique institution in San Francisco, in North Beach in particular, and has been voted by Esquire Magazin in 2015, as one of the top bars in the Nation.

Our lease is up in a few months, this summer, and Legacy Business Status would give Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café, a secured ten years of continuity of existence in North Beach. The ownership of Specs' is fully committed to keeping the integrity of Specs' 12 Adler as an institution, going into the future, with the singular and celebrated vision first created by Richard Simmons in 1968.

In the binder, along with visual materials and letters of support, you can find the prospectus for the documentary film that Elly Simmons is working on, in which further information on the vision, constituency, and history of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café is documented. Specs' Bar is already called a Legacy Bar, in San Francisco Chronicle writer J.K. Dineen's new book. "High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco."

Receiving the status of Legacy Business through our City government is imperative for moving into the future as a treasured San Francisco institution. Please do not hesitate to ask for any further documentation.

Elly Simmons holds the archives of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café and can provide whatever materials would be helpful to The Historical Preservation Committee and the Small Business Commission.

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To  
Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Executive Director  
Office of Small Business Assistance Center  
city Hall, Suite 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe

Specs' is a city treasure! I can't think of another bar that deserves legacy status more than the beloved North Beach landmark. It has been a gathering place for artists, writers and musicians for decades and is a neighborhood institution. I strongly support making Specs' a legacy business.

Sincerely,

Gary Kamiya  
Author: "Cool Grey City of Love"  
San Francisco Chronicle  
147 Varennes St.  
San Francisco, CA 94133

3/17/2016 11:56 AM

specs

you look down  
this sunny  
but tiny alley  
'n  
you're sure it's  
a tire factory

when you get closer  
you're positive  
it's a sweatshop  
'n  
the clatter  
of the ventilators  
sound like a bunch  
of tiny chinese ladies  
working at sewing machines

as you enter, you expect  
shirts or denim overalls  
to be thrown through the door

instead, there's only  
a bartender frowning  
behind the plank, but  
you're not his concern

it's a piece of bar equipment  
that doesn't work the way  
he believes it should

you take a look around  
'n  
realize nothing in here  
works as it should

then you know  
you're in specs

George Tsongas

SPECS POEM BY THE LATE GEORGE TSONGAS  
SPECS HAS BEEN FREQUENTED BY ALL THE  
NORTH BEACH POETS SINCE ITS' INCEPTION IN  
1968

March 11, 2016

Al Ribaya  
Al's Attire  
1300 Grant Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94133

In Regards to Legacy Business Status for Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe

I highly recommend Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe as a San Francisco Legacy Business. I have been frequenting the reknown and highly esteemed north beach cafe for over twenty years and have been outfitting Specs Simmons since the day We met through my Handcrafted custom made shoes, hats, suits and shirts.

The bar is more than a bar, it is a neighborhood gathering place , and I have known most of the clients in there for most of the time I have had my business in North Beach. I have myself been in business in North Beach for over twenty years myself.

Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe has a rich history of being a gathering place for locals since the late 60's. It is one of the few places I call home when I get finished with my day's work. It is very comforting.

In an era of change in San Francisco, I feel that Specs' bar is one of the city's gems and should be given Legacy Status as an honor to its' legacy, and as a measure of security for continuity of existence in San Francisco.

With Respect,

Al Ribaya  
Al's Attire  
1300 Grant avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94133

415 693-9900





EARLY PHOTOS - 1970's

# Kitty

M A R G O L I S

March 21, 2016

Dear Ms. Dick-Endrizzi,

As a fourth generation San Franciscan, resident of North Beach since 1976, record company owner and touring jazz artist (I recorded two of my best selling albums live in venues on Broadway), I am writing in strong support of Specs 12 Adler Museum Café being awarded a Legacy Business designation. When I voted YES on Prop J, it was Specs I had in mind. I can think of no more deserving candidate.

Specs is the most authentic, old-school tavern in town. The place has a burnished patina that is 100% unique, a quirky gestalt of the fascinating collected objects on display, the veteran bartenders (you will never hear the dreaded word "mixologist" here,) and a loyal regular clientele composed of legendary neighborhood characters: artists, activists, writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers, intellectuals, bon vivants & boulevardiers mixing with newer denizens who have migrated to SF for the tech Gold Rush and travelers in search of the Real Thing, the fabled San Francisco as described by Kerouac, Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti.

Anchoring what I like to call the "Bohemian Golden Triangle," Specs is tucked back in a charming little square across from City Lights and Vesuvio's with Coppola's beautiful Sentinel Bldg. just down the hill. Much more than a bar, Specs has been a community cultural meeting place for decades, throwing poetry readings, jazz nights and much-anticipated neighborhood feeds on a regular basis. It's the go-to after concert destination for many of the marquee artists playing SFJAZZ, The Great American Music Hall, The Fillmore and The Warfield.

Even as San Francisco is changing very rapidly, North Beach shines as one of SF's most traditional and definitive neighborhoods. Specs himself is a beloved San Francisco treasure--the unofficial mayor of North Beach-- and his eponymous bar symbolizes the essence of the City. We must carefully steward this place. If we lose Specs, we lose a big piece of our soul.

Sincerely,



Kitty Margolis

P.O. Box 330425 San Francisco Ca 94133-0425

Phone 415-397-9361 Fax 415-398-6964

e-mail: [kittym@kittymargolis.com](mailto:kittym@kittymargolis.com)

web site: [www.kittymargolis.com](http://www.kittymargolis.com)



1980



SPECS SIMMONS + KENT MCCARTHY Bartending

2012



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION - PRIVATE - AFTERNOON  
PRE: OPENING HOURS

Dear Regina Dick-Endrizzi

I would like to offer my support in consideration of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe as a Legacy Business. It is my understanding that there are a number of businesses that are seeking this designation, and I appreciate your position in determining which businesses should receive such a designation.

I own and operate two restaurants in the North Beach district of San Francisco, Tupelo and Belle Cora and am also a board member of The North Beach Business Association. "Belle Cora" was named after a notorious "entrepreneur" of the city's iconic gold rush days, and was chosen in particular to remind people that this city has a legacy of fantastic historical places. I would put Specs at the top of the list. It seems that by the day we are seeing the culture of San Francisco change, and with it we are losing some really great establishments.

Designating Specs as a "Legacy Business" will hopefully help to keep one of our last great drinking establishments alive and well. I often find myself retiring to Specs after a long day of work because of its' comfort and the people that call it "home". Every once in a while they even let me tickle the ivories on the piano in the back between interesting and stimulating conversations with the poets, writers and artists that enjoy those beautiful four walls and each other.

There are a lot of establishments that are trying to capture exactly what Specs has accomplished over the last 48 years slowly and organically. It is truly one of those rare places, not only in San Francisco, but in the country. Anything that we can do to help keep it going is both a privilege and a necessity. Thank you so much for taking the time to consider Specs' a legacy business. The designation would be nothing other than completely accurate.

Sincerely,

Teague Kernan  
Tupelo  
and Belle Cora



Jack Hirschman's poetry reading at his home party May 31 '92. photo by M. S. 100

## RE: Specs 12 Adler Museum Cafe

Letter of Support as a San Francisco Legacy Business

Where do you take your out of town guests to explain what is unique about San Francisco? What do you tell them about the Beats, the legendary poets and lifestyle experimenters who made North Beach famous around the world? People come to this city to hang out where Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Ferlinghetti changed the world. No better place exists to learn about the Beats than Specs 12 Adler Museum Cafe, a quirky bar haunted by local poets, artists, and musicians. Its walls are covered with pamphlets, articles, letters, paintings, photos, taxidermy, and many other odd items. One can celebrate people still here and others long gone, plan future projects and publications, argue politics, and engage in discussions of great literature where the tourists and the travelers meet the regulars. It is an historic place to grow old together, to enjoy a drink with a friend, and to be part of a tradition of tolerance and love that has spread around the world.

Wendover Brown | Ohlone Press, LLC

Mobile: 650 678 8652

SKYPE: Wendover Brown (San Francisco)

[Wendover@vogmask.com](mailto:Wendover@vogmask.com)

[www.vogmask.com](http://www.vogmask.com)

Marc A. Brown, Rainmaker-in-Chief

[marc@sfumbrella.com](mailto:marc@sfumbrella.com)

The San Francisco Umbrella Company

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BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS FOR REGULARS... 3/6/2016

February 18, 2016

Ms. Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Executive Director  
Office of Small Business  
Small Business Assistance Center  
City Hall, Suite 110  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Legacy Business Status for Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe

Dear Ms. Dick-Enrizzi :

As a sixth generation San Franciscan, whose ancestors (great, great, great grandfather) arrived in San Francisco in 1776 to help build the Presidio and Mission Dolores, my family has long appreciated small businesses that express the traditions, color and flavor of our wonderful city.

Having grown up on Russian Hill and spent most of my adult life in and around North Beach, I can say unequivocally that Specs' 12 Adler is one such institution. Hidden away at the back of Saroyan Place, it is a genuine expression of an older North Beach that is unchanged in most respects since the 1950's and 1960's. It is like stepping into a time warp where one loses all sense that just outside its doors, it is in fact the 21st century. Specs embraces you in its warmth and hospitality---one cannot help but leave its welcoming atmosphere without a genuine sense that at least for a moment all seems right with the universe.

I would urge that Specs be given Legacy Business status this year. It has certainly earned it.

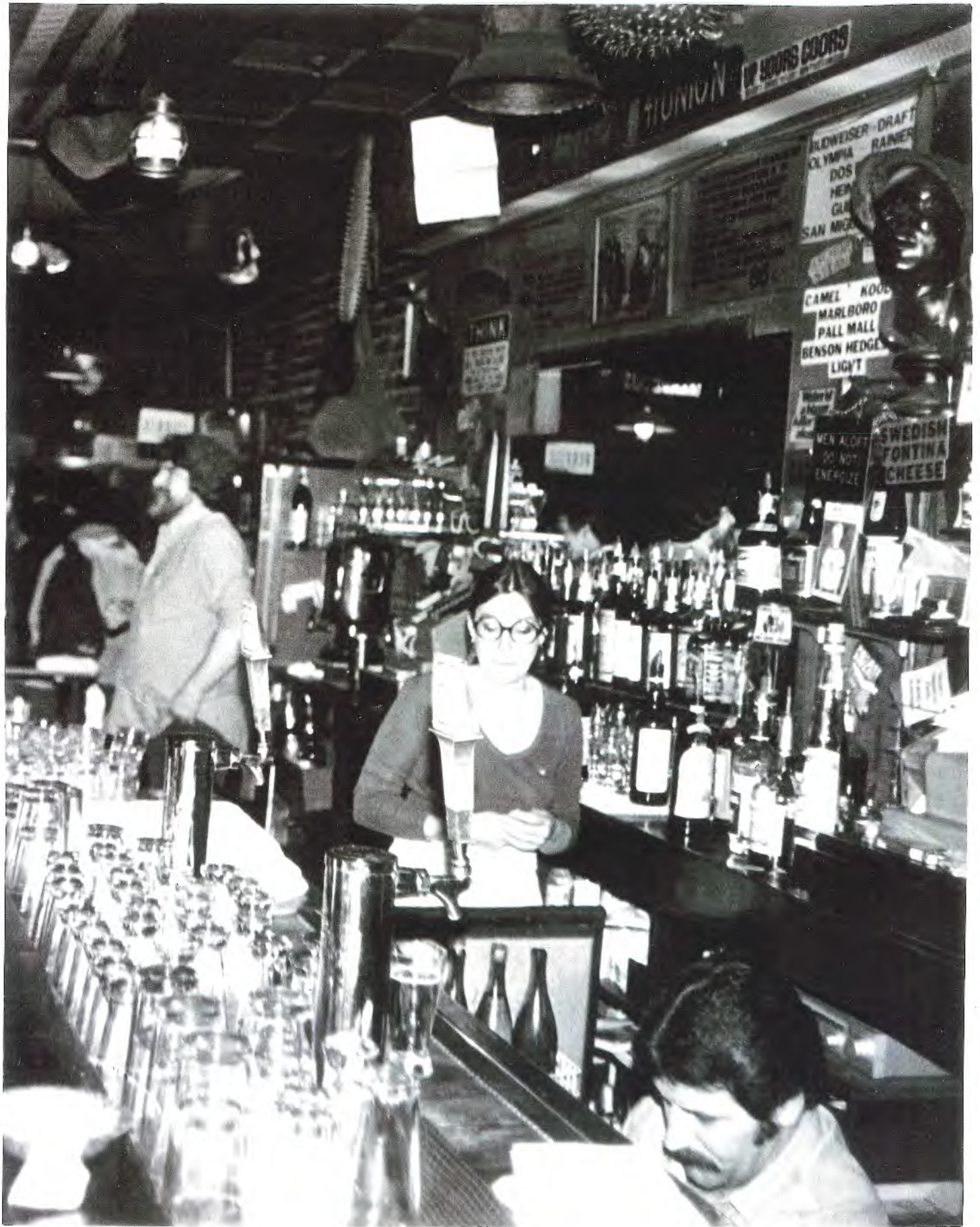
Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Tony Gantner  
Attorney-At-Law  
235 Chestnut St.  
San Francisco, CA 94133

415 596-3626





DEBORAH ADAMS - FIRST WOMAN BARTENDER OF NORTH BEACH

February 19, 2016

Vesuvio Café  
255 Columbus Ave  
San Francisco, CA 94133

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Vesuvio Café to recommend Specs 12 Adler Museum Café for inclusion in the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry. Specs has been an important social and cultural spot every since Mr 'Specs' Simmons purchased the bar with proceeds from the sale of a song to the Kingston Trio.

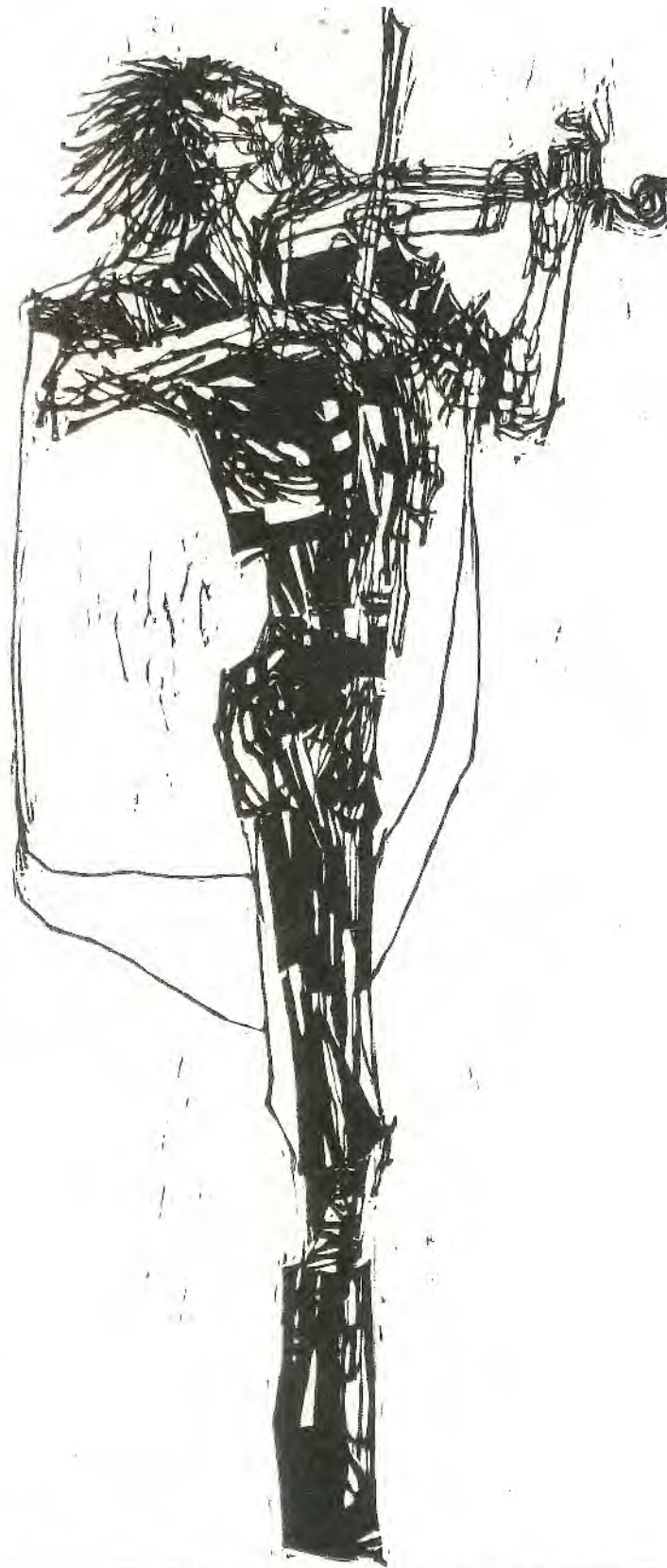
Vesuvio has enjoyed a long and happy relationship with our neighbor, Mr. Simmons met his wife in Vesuvio! Elly Simmons, an internationally know fine artist has displayed her work here. We are very proud of the legacy that Specs created and continues to maintain in North Beach and in San Francisco.

We sincerely hope Specs is among the first of the San Francisco Legacy Businesses.

Kindly,

Janet Clyde

Vesuvio Café



ARTWORK  
By  
LONGTIME  
SPECS'  
REGULAR  
KRISTEN  
Wetterhahn

---

signature art works of  
**KRISTEN WETTERHAHN**  
selections from 80's & 90's

---

**CANESSA GALLERY**  
September 5 - 29 1995  
Reception Sunday September 22, 4-7pm

Regina Dick-Endrizzi  
Executive Director  
Office of Small Business  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco CA 94102

Dear Regina Dick-Endrizzi,

I'm writing to offer my support for the designation of Specs 12 Adler Museum Café as a legacy business.

As the author of a recent book on legacy bars of San Francisco, I spent a lot of time studying the city's most historic bars. I would argue that only a handful of drinking establishments in San Francisco could compete with Specs in terms of significance.

Richard "Specs" Simmons opened the bar in 1968 and since that time Specs has served as an informal community center for its North Beach Neighborhood. Specs is the rare place that feels very much like a historic place, yet it is current and vibrant. There are ghosts and stories going back decades, but it doesn't feel nostalgic or like a marketing ploy.

Specs is unique not only for its museum-quality collection of oddities and memorabilia but its current community of regulars. It is the most significant connection to the city's golden era as a center of beat poetry and politics. It continues to offer a home to that community. It also represents a strong connection to the city's maritime history and union activism.

Specs is a local and national treasure. It is first place I take many out of town visitors. Anything you could do to ensure its survival – which the legacy designation would certainly do – would be of the utmost importance.

Sincerely,

J.K. Dineen

Author of "High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco"



BEAT  
POET  
RUTH  
WEISS



SPUSS'  
85th  
BIRTH-  
DAY  
BASH  
  
'HEESE-  
CAKE!

To whom it may concern,

I, Alistair Monroe, founder of the North Beach Jazz Festival and previous proprietor of Mojito Café 2005 ( now Tupelo) and original Café manager to North End Café 1994 (now The Church Key), am writing in support of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café.

This historic tavern in the North Beach San Francisco is and will remain an iconic landmark to California and is known throughout the world as a Beat Museum. Specs' 12 Adler Place Museum Café, at 12 in Saroyan Alley, North Beach neighborhood, has operated for 48 years this April, by owner, Richard (Specs) Simmons, and his family since opening day, April 26, 1968.

The Museum Cafe is an integral part of the North Beach and is frequented by local business owners and world travelers, and regulars throughout the country, who come to Specs' to learn history and gathering amongst friends as an education platform to not only meet world travelers but to meet writers, poets and musicians.

I highly recommend specs for a legacy status business, help them secure their existence in North Beach. The ownership of Specs' is fully committed to keeping the integrity of Specs' 12 Adler as an institution, going into the future, with the singular and celebrated vision first created by Richard Simmons in 1968.

Kind regards,  
Alistair Monroe  
North Beach Jazz Festival  
Cubamera Project  
[www.cubamera.org](http://www.cubamera.org)  
415.971.5640

San Francisco Journal

# I Warren Hinckle Spec's illustrious 75th

## Crossing the North Beach divide

**T**he Chattanooga Choo-Choo was late into North Beach Sunday night. The choo-choo lumbered into Twelve Adler Place about eighthish, bar time; it had not improbably stopped to take on supplies at a few watering holes along the right-of-way.

Twelve Adler Place is the address of Spec's, a bar of the same name as its owner, who is without mortal dispute the most experienced train rider in North Beach. Spec's is nicknamed for his glasses, which are as omnipresent as the hood ornament on a '60s Cadillac; the Choo-Choo thing

comes from his penchant for going to the train station and buying a ticket for the first place for which the next train was leaving; this has led to adventures, some of which, if the stars and the mood are right, he will recount to the curious. He makes friends as easily as a puppy dog and hates no one except for Richard Nixon.

The signature glasses frame a full moon face and eyes those of a violinist, possibly a cellist. He dresses easily in longshoreman drag, black pants, blue work shirt unbuttoned to two o'clock. He is a world traveler of Richard Halliburton's class and carries the knowing confidence of a man who has been to Atlantis and back and is familiar with all the pit stops.

Sunday night was Spec's 75th anniversary and his fans, of which there are many, gathered at Twelve Adler Place to celebrate, courtesy of Spec's who insists on throwing his

own birthday parties, untrusting of the vagaries of friends who may also be fools.

Twelve Adler is in an alcove of the Beach off Columbus and Broadway that has gained elusive fame as the Bermuda Triangle of the most bohemian section of the most interesting city in the world. Next door is operatic bar The Tosca, where Spec's often hangs out with his friend Jeanette Etheridge to avoid the customers in his own joint, across Columbus street is Vesuvio's, about which little is reliably recorded except that travelers from Portland, Oregon, have been known to darken its portals and never to appear again for days, sometimes years. Next door to Vesuvio's, and directly across the street from Spec's, is City Lights bookstore. Now we know where we are.

Spec's bar is a page out of a full-page panel of the Little Nemo in Slumberland comic printed in a old Hearst broad-

sheet; the colors are those of a slightly out-of-register newspaper press, the reds are kept up, the grays the gray of roadkill, whites like separated eggs, blacks the eyes of a snake. It is like a cluttered set for a Houdini magic with ancient political signs and buttons for every leftist cause since Norman Thomas, Henry Wallace and Jesus Christ.

The only modern sound is the muted clank of chess pieces moving. On the bar as sobriety insurance are soda crackers and wedges of cheese of a school bus yellow kept under a clear bell like a Tiffany setpiece and sold for a nominal sum. The stairs upward from the Johns once wound to the dressing rooms of a strip club fronting on Broadway and the girls would whisk down like naked fireflies for a quick drink with the chess players until a sexual Scrooge boarded up the transit door.

Everything about Spec's is legend which he dispels with the specific gravity of a fortune cookie. His last name is Simmons and he is disinterested in using his first name and he came from Boston where he was a metalworker. The top of the legend pile — which has several versions — is the fine story of how he befriended two lefty sisters in

the McCarthy period who had written a rebellious song and had it copyrighted for them and then shipped out as a merchant marine. In a faraway port he heard the song being sung by the Kingston Trio, became the hit M.T.A. song about traveling forever on the Boston subway.

Spec's alerted the sisters that their song was on the top of the charts and they thereafter rewarded him with a small royalty with which he bought Twelve Adler Place — and such is the stuff of legend.

"I was the first woman to bartend at nights in North Beach," Deborah Adams was saying late Sunday night in Spec's as the birthday crowd dispersed into the warm North Beach night. "When Spec's hired me in 1976, there was an unwritten rule that women weren't welcome as bartenders and especially not night bartenders and especially in North Beach.

"Spec's broke that rule and here I was for decades," she said. Deborah is the daughter of a prominent San Francisco civil libertarian family and a fit with the anti-anti-establishment grammar of Spec's' bar.

Not everything about Spec's is p.c. Around the walls, discreetly hidden, a prankster has secreted fart pillows.

By  
MICHAEL  
GRIM-  
SPECS'  
Bartender  
Now

# 80 LASHES FOR SPECS GIMMONI!

HE COULDN'T KEEP HIS HANDS OFF HER PRIVATE STASH OF GORDON'S GIN... OR OFF HER BIKINI CLAD CREW OF BRAZEN SEA STRUMPETS!

COME AND HELP GIVE HIM THE BIRTHDAY PLOTTING HE SO RICHLY DESERVES!

SUNDAY AUGUST 17, 2008 AT SPECS 12 ADLER MUSEUM

By  
JACK  
'THE  
HAT"  
Regdon

FUN! FUN? HELL.

I'VE LAUGHED IN THE JAWS OF FUN.

★ ★

WHAT FUN! WHAT FUN?

889 FC 3E

WHALES MAKE DAMN GOOD EATING! \*

Sausage HAM STEAKS CHOPS ROASTS TONGUE Sausage Sausage

HELL, LET'S DO WHALE SOMETIME.

Dr Sam Ripers-Harpoon North Fort Lauderdale

8-88 PC 3E



# SPECS' AS A "LEGACY" BAR

Elly Simmons <ellysimmons@saber.net>  
Heyday — Q & A with "High Spirits" author J. K. Dineen  
March 15, 2016 7:35 AM

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Q & A with "High Spirits"  
author J. K. Dineen

When author/San Francisco  
aficionado Gary Kamiya  
describes a book as "a  
righteous pour from the top

Ohlone Language Activist  
Responds to Canonization of  
Junipero Serra during Pope  
Francis' Visit to the United  
States

In response to the  
canonization of Fr. Junipero  
Serra, "News from Native  
California" magazine's

## Q & A with "High Spirits" author J. K. Dineen

November 19, 2015 by Mariko Connor



When author/San Francisco aficionado Gary Kamiya describes a book as "a righteous pour from the top shelf," that's a very good sign you should add it to your bookshelf. High Spirits: The Legacy Bars of San Francisco invites readers into twenty-six joints that serve as anchors of cultural identity, offering up human connection and deep sense of place—even as the city changes before our eyes. Written by San Francisco Chronicle reporter J. K. Dineen, each profile weaves atmospheric descriptions together with the history of the site and personal stories of owners, staff, and longtime patrons. J. K. and I recently talked via email about San Francisco Heritage's Legacy Bar program, good craic, and the research that went into crafting High Spirits.

### What is a San Francisco Legacy Bar?

We started with a list of places that had been around for at least forty years and demonstrated a continuity of culture or community. It's not just about architecture or pictures of Herb Caen or Neal Cassady framed on the wall. That stuff is cool but can be bought on eBay. We were looking for places with deep San Francisco identities, bars that have a story to tell about the city.

### How do these establishments play into the larger conversation about the city's rapidly changing neighborhoods?

Bars are just very public places—obviously even the word "pub" is derived from public house—so when a bar loses its lease, or gets priced out because of rising rents, people notice. The neon sign goes dark. The music stops. And it becomes brick-and-mortar manifestation of the unsettling change a lot of people are privately experiencing throughout the city. Maybe an example of this is the recent news that two downtown places, Dave's and Zeke's, are both closing. Neither is particularly historic or even especially charming. They are just ordinary bars. But in today's San Francisco, especially

Q & A with "Cityscapes 2" author John King  
In his follow-up to Cityscapes: San Francisco and Its Buildings, urban design critic John King

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A State of Change  
BookDragon  
booktown  
California Historical Society  
California Literary Review  
D. J. Waldie: Where We Are  
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IKE  
Jacket Copy  
Katherine A. Briccetti  
Kevin Nelson, Writer  
Peter Richardson  
Phantom Seedlings  
Reading California Fiction  
Real People | Real Stories  
The Fake Angelano  
Tim Palmer  
UC Press Blog  
World of Mailman

downtown, there are only a few regular, unfussy, affordable drinking establishments left. So there's a collective sense [of,] "Okay, obviously ordinary bars are vanishing. What about ordinary people? What about me?"

**I was intrigued by your descriptions of your childhood experiences in country pubs in western Ireland. What does craic translate to—and can it translate into something that can be found in San Francisco's barrooms?**

I always thought the craic was a Gaelic word, but turns out it's more like pseudo-Gaelic. To me it's a freewheeling sociability that elevates a room and breaks down barriers. It's gossip, yarns, banter, music, the clicking of bottles, the tapping of toes, a healthy disregard and disdain for title, professional status, or worldly responsibility. Definitely it's found in San Francisco all over the place.—Hotel Utah, La Rocca's Corner, Specs, Mr. Bing's, to name a few places.



Photo of Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café by Spencer Brown. (Click to enlarge.)

## TOPICS

Art (39)  
Author Q & A (27)  
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Berkeley Roundhouse (4)  
Book News (38)  
California Indian (7)  
California Legacy Project (4)  
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Events (13)  
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Fun Stuff (39)  
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SPECS' 12 ADLER MUSEUM CAFE

**Some of the bars in book, like Vesuvio and Specs, are pretty famous and well-documented, while others like the Silver Crest Donut Shop and the Gangway are much more obscure. Was it harder to chronicle the obscure places? What were the biggest challenges you faced?**

The hardest ones to write were the places I had the strongest sentiments about. Specs was challenging—as a person and a bar there is just so much material. Someone should write a book just on that place. Same with Hotel Utah and the Zam Zam. Other places, like Sam Jordan's and La Rocca's Corner, were tough because the regulars were justifiably suspicious of my motives. I mean [when] you work hard all day and head to your local bar for a cocktail, pretty much the last guy you want sitting next to you is a writer with a notebook and a bunch of stupid questions like "What makes this bar special?" So for some of them you have to hang out, catch a rap with some of the barroom constituents, watch a couple of innings of a Giants game, buy people a few drinks, soak up the vibe, and then kind of tip-toe into the information pool.

**Spec's** 12 Saroyan Pl. (off Columbus Ave., near Broadway St.)  
 415-421-4112  
 Hours: 12, 15, 41

Vaguely maritime in its approach, Spec's is one part curio shop for every two parts bar. Solo drinkers will find an evening's amusement in the literally hundreds of dust-laden and historic items tacked to every square inch of wall and ceiling: real estate: old flags, shark jaws, shrunken heads, model ships, wartime photos, Native American wood sculptures, an enormous painted tortoise shell, etc. Ever wondered how big a walrus penis is? Take a look above the bar. Spec's is also home to some of the best bumper stickers you've never seen on the highway: Stop Solar Energy; Mutants for Nuclear Power; Village Idiots for a Toxic Environment; Ask me about my vow of silence, etc.

Those with hopes of finding any alcoholic remnants of Beat-era San Francisco might just stumble across something poetic here — if it can't be found in the bottom of a glass. While the crowd can veer toward the youngish and well-heeled, you can still find goatee-sporting, blazer-wearing grayheads who shuck and jive Beat-style with the bartenders and fellow oldsters. The staff tends toward the artist/intellectual-type, putting Spec's on a different plane from most of its neighborhood contemporaries.

Though there are plenty of stools at the long wooden bar, most people arrive in groups and gather around tables to talk among themselves. But with the slightly upper-scale Tosca next door and close proximity to a number of other bars, Spec's and its resident alleyway offer plenty of opportunities to meet people, bum smokes or a puff of something more intoxicating, and find new friends at least for an evening.

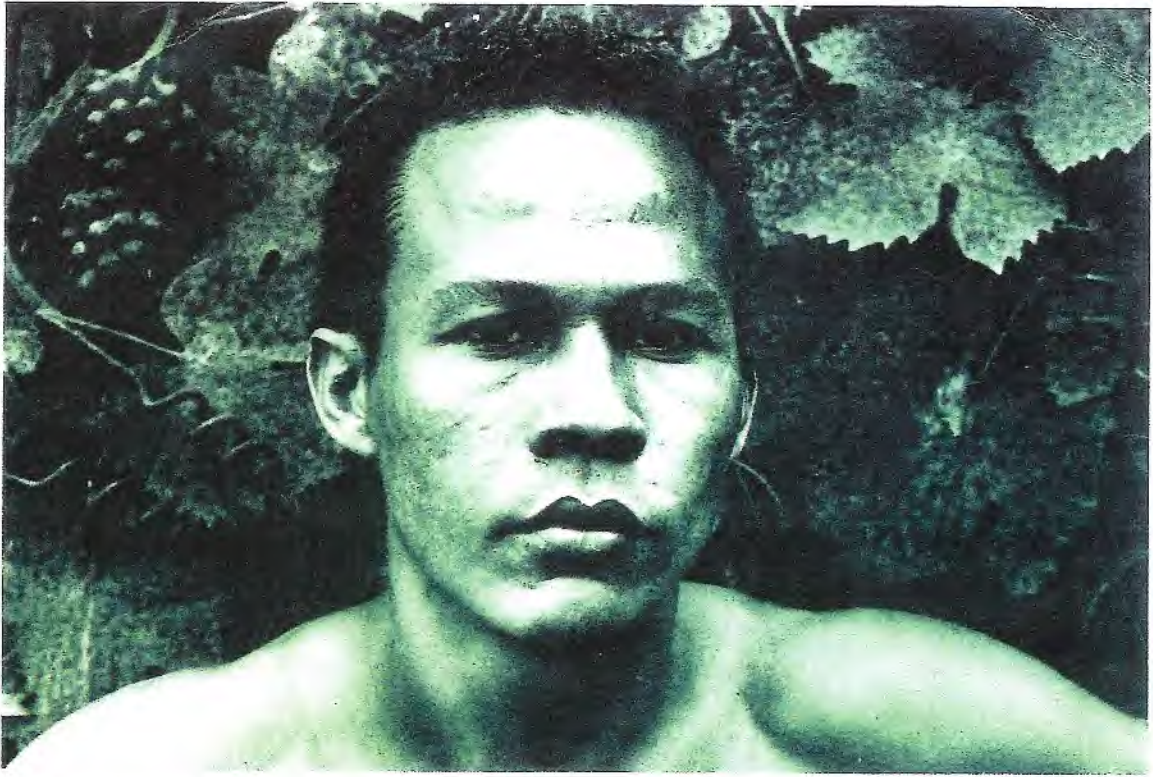
Dive rating: ●●●●●●●●



Spec's

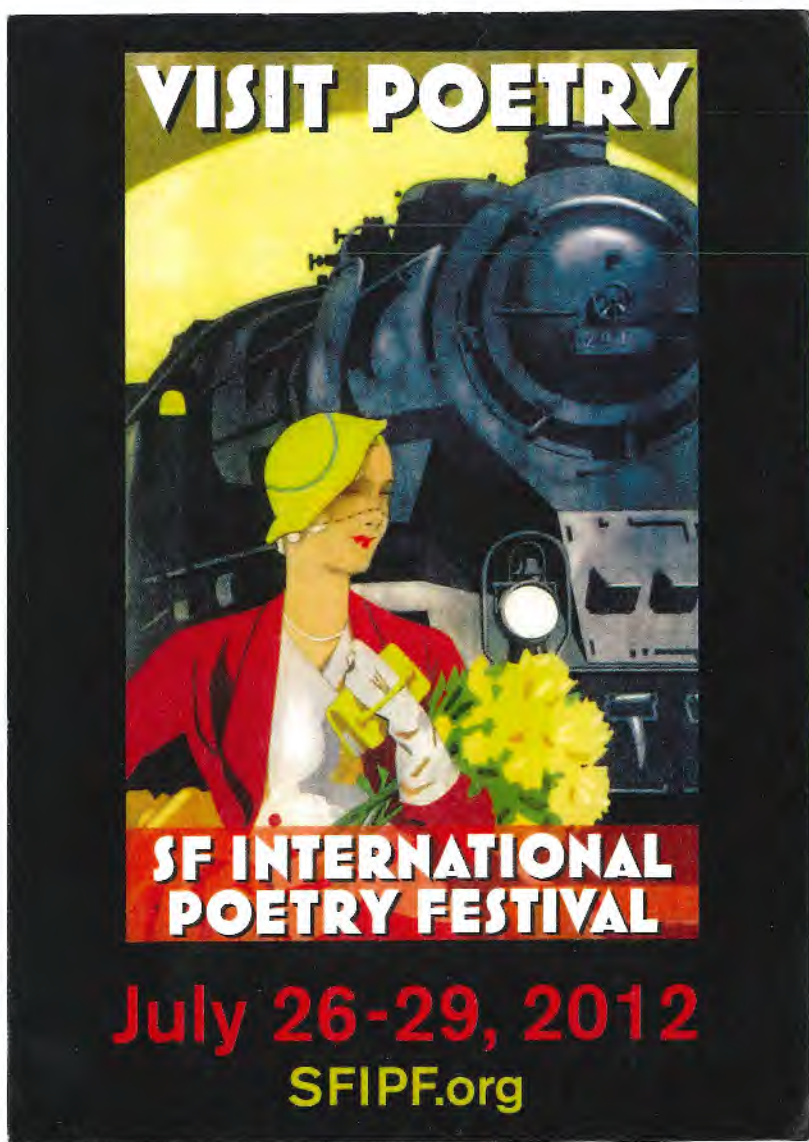
SAN FRANCISCO'S  
 BEST DIVE BARS  
 DRINKING AND DIVING IN THE CITY BY THE BAY

SPECS'  
REGULAR  
↓  
POET  
BOB  
KAUFMAN

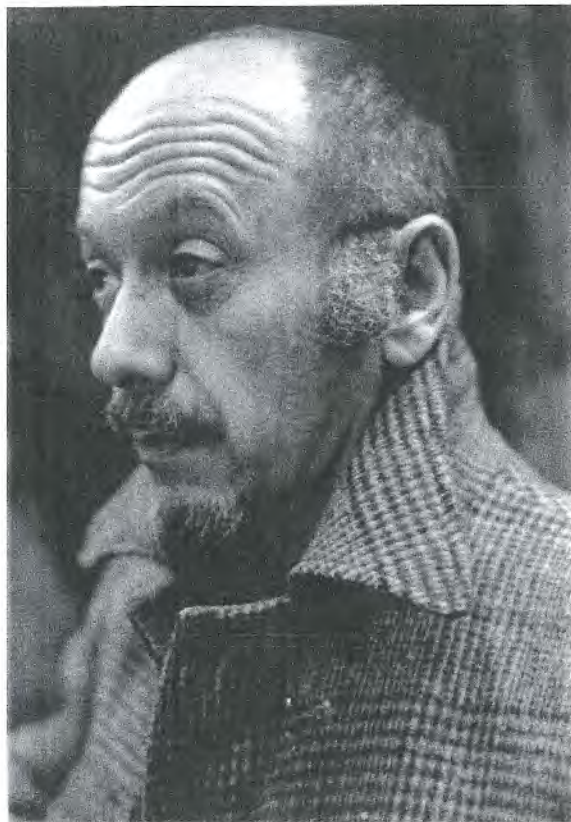




THE "DREADED" 86 CARD



INTERNATIONAL POETRY  
FESTIVAL  
ORGANIZED BY SPECS'  
REGULARS AND THE  
GREAT EDUARDO GALEANO  
... ..



## **LAST CALL : THE SPECS' FILM**

STORIES OF LOVE, LOSS AND LUST IN A TWENTY FIRST CENTURY BAR

**Logline:** **Last Call: The Specs' Film** is a HD documentary film project, which will be available as two programs; a one-hour broadcast and extended as a feature-length theatrical release. The program is a triptych portrait of bar owner Specs Simmons', of the bar Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe bar (established in 1968) in San Francisco's North Beach, and finally, the North Beach community in which it lives.

Project Contact:  
Elly Simmons - director/producer  
Red Star Cinema  
Box 463  
Lagunitas, CA 94938  
415 497-8004  
[info@ellysimmons.com](mailto:info@ellysimmons.com)

## Background

Specs Simmons, innkeeper, was born in Roxbury, Boston on August, 15, 1928, in the midst of a terrible heat wave to a second generation Jewish-American working class family. At 14 years of age, Specs began working at Phillip Simmons & Sons Sheet Metal Shop, his grandfather's shop, fabricating hotel & restaurant equipment, elevators, and helping the war effort with the mass fabrication of sheet metal steel coffins for the war dead of WW11.

Roxbury, Boston, was at that time a predominately black and Jewish neighborhood, sprinkled with Italian, Polish and Irish families as well. Specs' (born Richard Edward Simmons) was the same age as Malcolm X and they both attended Roxbury High School concurrently. Richie (as he was called by family members) had three bookie uncles, Yae, Tzib, and Tex, who together ran Yae's Variety Store, where locals would come to place bets on horses and greyhound races, eat pickles, smoke cigar's, drink Schnapps, and spin yarns. Malcolm X would go there to run numbers before his transformation into a Black Muslim after his time spent in prison.

Shaped by the blossoming of new American cinema, in an age of assimilation for East Coast American immigrant cultures, Specs Simmons was raised going to vaudeville theaters and stand-up comedy acts, where Jewish-Americans gained recognition on stage and on the small screen with the advent of television. He and his family would see comedians such as the beloved Henny Youngman, Milton Berle, Mort Sahl and Sid Caesar. On Sundays family would gather over deli food and visit elders, take walks in local parks and tell stories of the old country, politics and labor.

The Bornsteins, Specs' maternal side of the family, were all notorious jokesters and natural born storytellers. The family line was always that "you couldn't get a word in edgewise", a tradition that continues on to this day with his granddaughter Maralisa, and his daughter, Elly.

All these social and cultural elements formed the basic character of Specs Simmons, in an era in which, America was in great transition and change, forging a new identity in the post-industrial era.

At the tender age of 17, Specs boarded a freighter and sailed the seven seas on a quest to witness a post-WWII Eastern Europe and the newly formed state of Israel, where he stayed with both Arab and Jewish families. After returning to the States he joined a group of Boston childhood friends moving to the West Coast to work in the shipyards of Southern California. In 1951, Specs landed in San Francisco's North Beach.

In the early 1950's North Beach was in flux. The traditional Italian neighborhood was opening up to a flood of writers, jazz musicians, painters and the Beat generation. It was here that Specs found something bright, shiny and promising - a new home, and a family to call his own.

San Francisco was also home to the burgeoning civil rights movement, the continuing struggles of blue-collar workers and organized labor, red diaper babies, and the first buds of the women's movement.

It is here the story begins.

## Treatment

**Last Call: The Specs Film** will be available in two formats; as a one-hour HD broadcast program and as a HD feature length festival documentary. The program is a triptych portrait of bar owner Specs Simmons, of the bar - Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe (established in 1968) in San Francisco's North Beach, and finally, the North Beach community in which it lives. Using traditional documentary technique (interviews, archival footage, and b-roll) interspersed with family history collages created by director Elly Simmons, the project will be a visually rich art film. The artistic and stylistic approach will consist of multiple layers of visual and audio collages which integrate historical and contemporary imagery composed of paint, paper and fabric, including works by the artists of Specs' bar, readings and literary overlays from works by the poets and writers of Specs', as well as audio collages from the musicians that call Specs' home, and mix tapes from Specs' extensive personal collection of American Roots music, blues, jazz, and world music. The recounting and telling of Specs' history will be interwoven with rich visual and musical surprises and twists for a jazzy and cheeky, artistic approach.

The program is comprised of an introduction and six chapters:

Chapter I - Early Days – Specs Simmons Learns the World

Chapter II - The Seafaring Journey: a young man's journey

Chapter III - North Beach's Trinity - Spec's 12 Adler Museum Café (1968) + Vesuvio Cafe + Tosca

Chapter IV - Creation of a Kaleidoscopic Epicenter of Activist Culture

Chapter V - Off Beat Denizens - Poets, Painters, Strippers, the Working Stiffs, Troubadours, & Suits

Chapter VI - Last Call: Stories of Love, Loss and Lust in a 21st Century Bar

### Early Days - Specs Simmons Learns the World

An aerial shot reveals San Francisco, we slam zoom to the corner of Columbus and Broadway, the heart of San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood and to Saroyan Alley, home to Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café, and we hear the clinking of glasses and the banter of denizens. The camera pulls up a chair with owner Specs Simmons.

Specs Simmons shares the connection of his present day bar to his beginnings in Roxbury, Boston. Archival footage and still imagery of Roxbury in the 1930s and 1940's illustrate the working class Jewish neighborhood of his youth, of Specs' vibrant humorous family at work and at play, including images of Specs' bar mitzvah and Passover celebrations with the elders, the more solemn cultural celebrations which anchored his appreciation for tradition and social responsibility.

An archival image reveals Specs as a young man standing in Boston, near Phillip Simmons & Sons Sheet Metal Shop, his grandfather's shop where he learned to be a "tin-knocker," and to an image of one of the sheet metal coffins he produced for the war dead during WWII. An image of him on a soapbox at age 17, mouthing off about his politics clearly illustrates his social and political views, and he talks about his early found roots in labor unions, values established through working at the family business and in



## **Treatment (continued)**

### **Early Days - Specs Simmons Learns the World**

viewing the harsh realities of life, the ongoing clash between management and the working stiff. Labor posters of the era will be interspersed with the bar's rich collection of union posters and buttons, as well as Spanish Civil War and Second World War posters and other memorabilia, giving a very rich visual texture to the film.

Specs talks of his first love, of quick-witted banter, a necessity in his youth in order to elbow into the conversation of his nine aunts and uncles. How this love of humor brought him to the stage and to his love of an audience. He shares his history of working in stand-up comedy clubs five days a week making good money, and being challenged by audiences wanting a more ribald humor than his youth yet allowed, and performing at many USO shows for soldiers deeply needing a laugh while they, and all of America, toiled for the war effort during WWII.

### **The Seafaring Journey: a young man's journey**

Specs' recounts that age 17, how he set out on a ship bound for Eastern Europe, just after the end of the WWII. He talks of attending Socialist Youth conferences and visiting the newly created state of Israel in 1949. We intercut to the many collected objects or chatchkas on the walls of his bar and he discusses how they reflect his journeys and those of the merchant marines who have made Specs' Bar their living room when they returned from sea, which continues until this day. Specs talks of his upbringing in the great port city of Boston, Massachusetts, which has always held great allure to the sea and it's mysteries, sea shanties and scrimshaw filled his personal family home as well as his world renown bar.

A spate of international travelers and workers from the docks and shipyards share their deep connection of travel, man and sea, and of the welcoming given to them by Specs' bar, a haven for travelers and workers. They share of the humorous "museum" of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe, a collection of odd and delightful objects gracing the walls and ceiling of the joint, dusty and amber-hued, which for them tells the story of Specs the man and the era in which he came of age.

### **North Beach's Trinity - Spec's 12 Adler Museum Café (1968) + Vesuvio Cafe + Tosca**

Specs spins his yarn of how in 1952, he worked at Vesuvio Cafe, home of the beats, hotel and restaurant workers, artist models and musicians. We intercut between present day and archival footage of Vesuvio's and its patrons from the 1950s era. Of his nights when he cooked the cheap spaghetti dinners that kept many locals going when they hung out after their days' work was done.

Elly Simmons talks of how her parents met. Intercutting between an iconic portrait in the bar of her mother Sonia Simmons, who hailed from the Lower East Side, New York, the woman who was to become Specs' wife and mother of his two children, and also the daughter of a Jewish immigrant family, from Russia. Specs shares how Sonia had planned to return to her home of New York City to live, but when Specs proposed to her after a few months together, she decided to make San Francisco her home and they began a life together in North Beach, and soon thereafter, a family.

## **Treatment (continued)**

### **North Beach's Trinity - Specs' 12 Adler Museum Café (1968) + Vesuvio Cafe + Tosca**

A collage image reveals the opening day of Specs' 12 Adler Museum Cafe on Sonia Simmons' birthday, April 26, 1968, when the famous "Golden Triangle" of North Beach was formed. Tosca bar owner Janette Etheridge shares how bar patrons travel the well-worn path across Columbus Avenue from Tosca bar and Specs' Bar, run by Specs himself, to Vesuvio Cafe, now run by long time bartender Janet Clyde. We intercut between present day footage of patrons transversing Columbus Avenue to and from the Tosca's, Vesuvio's and Specs'. Elly Simmons and Janet Clyde talks of the strong relationship between the owners, managers, and bartenders of all three establishments which remain tight to this day, and of the regulars who continue to float back and forth across and between these three iconic North Beach establishments.

Camera pans right to reveal the City Lights Bookstore, cutting to an image of Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Poet Laureate Jack Hirschman as well as City Light editor Elaine Katzenberger talk of the importance of Lawrence Ferlinghetti as the founder and publisher of City Lights Books, which remains to this day an anchor of literary culture in the neighborhood and around the world, with travelers coming daily to explore the works of many local writers and poets, many of whom hang at Specs' to this day. Final imagery reveals a present day gathering of writers and poets in Specs' bar.

### **Creation of a Kaleidoscopic Epicenter of Activist Culture**

Images of archival labor posters, Spanish Civil War posters, and news clippings of historic political and social activism are intercut with interviews with union activists, including Specs himself, Nick Oren, past printer for the San Francisco Chronicle, and Tony Long, cab driver and writer. They talk of labor values and why Specs' Bar is one of the only union bars in San Francisco, always welcoming activists and organizing in its' space, from ILWU and SEIU workers, to strippers from The Lusty Lady (the first organized strip joint in the USA). Specs' has been an organizing center for numerous progressive organizations over the decades, major environmental actions have been brainstormed over numerous pints of ale, and striking workers have come to decompress and relax after hours on the picket lines and in negotiations.

A collage of archival footage recounts the numerous social and political causes represented by activists hanging at Specs' throughout the turbulent and exciting 60's and 70's. Interviews with Claire Greensfelder, Specs Simmons, Rosalie Sorrells, Taj Mahal, and members of the Union of Left Writers, illustrate the participation of major organizers, artists, and worker bees from the anti war movement, the women's movement, including reproductive rights activism, the International Hotel struggle of Eminent Domain, key figures in the formation of the Environmental movement in the USA, and the world, and the myriad ethnic power movements including Chicano/UFW, Black, Asian-American & Native American/Alcatraz activists, have all made Specs' their home.

### **Off Beat Denizens - Poets, Painters, Strippers, the Working Stiffs, Troubadours, & Suits**

John Prine, Rosalie Sorrells, Boz Scaggs, Taj Mahal, Juan Felipe Herrera, Warren Hinkle, Margo St. James, Michael Disend, Herb Gold, Ron Turner, Bob Kaufman, Winston Smith, Jack Hirschman, Frank Garvey, Kitty Margolis, Thelonious Monk, and The Boys of the Lough, these are but a few of the musicians, writers, artists and infamous San Francisco characters who have frequented Specs' over the years.

## **Treatment (continued)**

### **Off Beat Denizens - Poets, Painters, Strippers, the Working Stiffs, Troubadours, & Suits**

Interviews with these folks as well as visuals of their work will illustrate the wide mix of creative clientele, which continues to develop with the changing population of the great city of San Francisco, as young hipster artists, spoken word poets and filmmakers flood into Specs for a drink and to brainstorm their creative work.

A montage reveals neon adult entertainment signage and ends on - The Garden of Eden. Specs' talks of how the Garden of Eden strip club and the bar used to share a common bathroom until recent years, and how the strippers would take their breaks in their scantily clad work clothes, much to the delight of the regulars, as Specs' has always been known as a safe haven for women (if they want it!). He jokes of how only two cards have ever been printed for the bar, one reading "Sir: The lady is not interested in your company" and "Ladies, the Gentleman prefers to Sulk in Silence". Current bartenders Jacqueline Honeybee, Michael Grim and Lucy Lee discuss the historic and diverse mix of clientele who have always made Specs' their home, from the corporate, including the Bechtel clan, which have been coming to the bar on Tuesdays and Fridays after work for decades, as well as to the Levi Strauss employees, and many high tech workers.

### **Last Call: Stories of Love, Loss and Lust in a 21st Century Bar**

Rehearsing in her mother's home, we hear Spec's granddaughter Maralisa Simmons-Cook, (who is attending The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in Manhattan), singing old time jazz and blues, as she illustrates her character, continuing the deep felt love of music in her family, and of the allure of performing for an audience.

We cut to a baby shower of Specs' regulars, and to interviews with young workers in high tech industries, and footage of the young and beautiful women bartenders of Specs' Bar.

We hear testimony from longtime regulars who continue to make the bar their home, mixing with a flood of young hipsters and world travelers on the lively and wild weekends of North Beach. Regulars from around the globe who hail from all continents; from Ireland, England, Egypt, Mexico, Guatemala, Eastern Europe, Greece, Asia and Africa.

Intercut with an archival collage of past and present day patrons, Director Elly Simmons shares how the bar is a prime example of the archetypal cycle of life, of how older regulars age and pass on, love, and lust imbibed by alcohol permeates a hot spring and summer in San Francisco, while other new couples marry and commit, settling down and having kids, and other recently divorced mid lifers (including the filmmaker) explore the crazy dramas of North Beach romance!

As so the universal dramas of human life encapsulated in a community of offbeat and beautiful regulars continue...



- BOZ SCABBS + SONIA SIMMONS - 1970's -  
IN SPECS! 12 Adler Museum Cafe



"The Hatseller"  
Avrum Rubenstein



COLLAGE  
BY ELLY  
SIMMONS



A FEW  
OF  
SPECS'  
ARTISTS



# So Far From Heaven

IRAQI  
MUSIC

BY PASHA



A POETRY + MUSIC EVENT FOR

AL-MUTANABBI STREET

MIDDLE  
EASTERN  
FOOD!

SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 6:30 pm

AT  
SPECS '12 ADLER MUSEUM  
2016  
CAFE

GERALD  
FLEMING

JACK  
HIRSCHMAN  
ELLY  
SIMMONS

KIM  
SHUCK

JESSICA  
LOOS

FRANCISCO  
ORREGO

SARAH MENESEE

YVONNE  
CANNON

NEELI  
CHERKOVSKI

MARALISA S.C.



BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Larry Pisoni serves Cully Fredricksen as Melly Goode watches in 'The Time of Your Life' at Specs'

## Viewing 'Life' in Real Barroom

Saroyan's relentlessly optimistic 'Time of Your Life' staged at Specs'

By Gerald Nachman  
Chronicle Theater Critic

Suddenly, amid dusty beer signs and memorabilia clinging to saloon walls like barnacles (a crab, a life preserver, street signs, faded photos) and, indeed, the cast itself, a play breaks out like a noisy brawl as observers in the jam-packed dive watch with the look of curious tourists.

Staging "The Time of Your Life" — William's Saroyan's 1939 play set only blocks away at "Nick's Pacific Street Saloon" — in a North Beach bar may be the neatest site-specific theatrical trick in years, the inspiration of director An-rea Gordon.

Spectators at Specs', a bar next to the Tosca set in a curve in the sidewalk once called Adler Alley and recently rechristened Saroyan Alley, watch in intermittent absorption as the slice-of-lowlife drama is played out by the Tour de Force Theatre Company on the gloriously cluttered joint's very stools, tables and piano.

### Teetering Winos

The tacky verisimilitude of the show's "set" was enhanced at the open-  
in-day intermission Sunday afternoon

— the show plays only matinees, through August 2, with Specs' reverting to its true saloon status at night — by the presence of two teetering winos outside the door.

Gordon's enterprising stunt both enhances and exploits the play. The staging gimmick succeeds as well as, maybe better than, the Saroyan classic does on its own rather dated yet occasionally entrancing terms, a fable made earnest by the playwright's belief in his own verbal fairy dust.

His down-and-out Frisco characters now seem (maybe always did) prettified by Saroyan's sentimental world view — a city where bums, tarts, two-bit tap dancers, drunks and drifters are ennobled.

It's like a Sunday "Herb Caen Classic" column from Oct. 25, 1939, returned to colorful rough-and-tumble life. If only Saroyan were here now to give dramatic color to the city's 1992 street life, but we easily make the leap.

Joe (Cully Fredricksen) sits sullenly at a table, hat tipped back, looking more prosperous than dissolute in vest and watch fob, nursing a glass of champagne and sending his willing, uncomprehending

toys, candy and a gun, with money won in horse races, as he goes about fixing the broken lives of saloon habitués with scuffed dreams.

### Persuasive Sermon

That's how it goes in Saroyanland, where seldom is heard a discouraging word, and if it is, said naysayer is quickly converted by the author's persuasive sermon that, "In the time of your life, live!"

Joe, the dream-spinner, asks, "What-dya want — love or money or fame or what?," and sets about providing it in Saroyan's waterfront version of "Fantasy Island."

Fredricksen's Joe has almost too commanding a manner, exuding a chilly presence, with a mysterious — at times scary, almost patronizing — smile and a weird enigmatic glint in his eye: what's his story? He says he steals and hurts people, and we believe it.

The play seems now a poor man's "Iceman Cometh" — overlaid with "A Thousand Clowns" whimsy — only considerably sweeter and anti-cynical, with a mostly accomplished cast who give the characters another whirl around the bar.





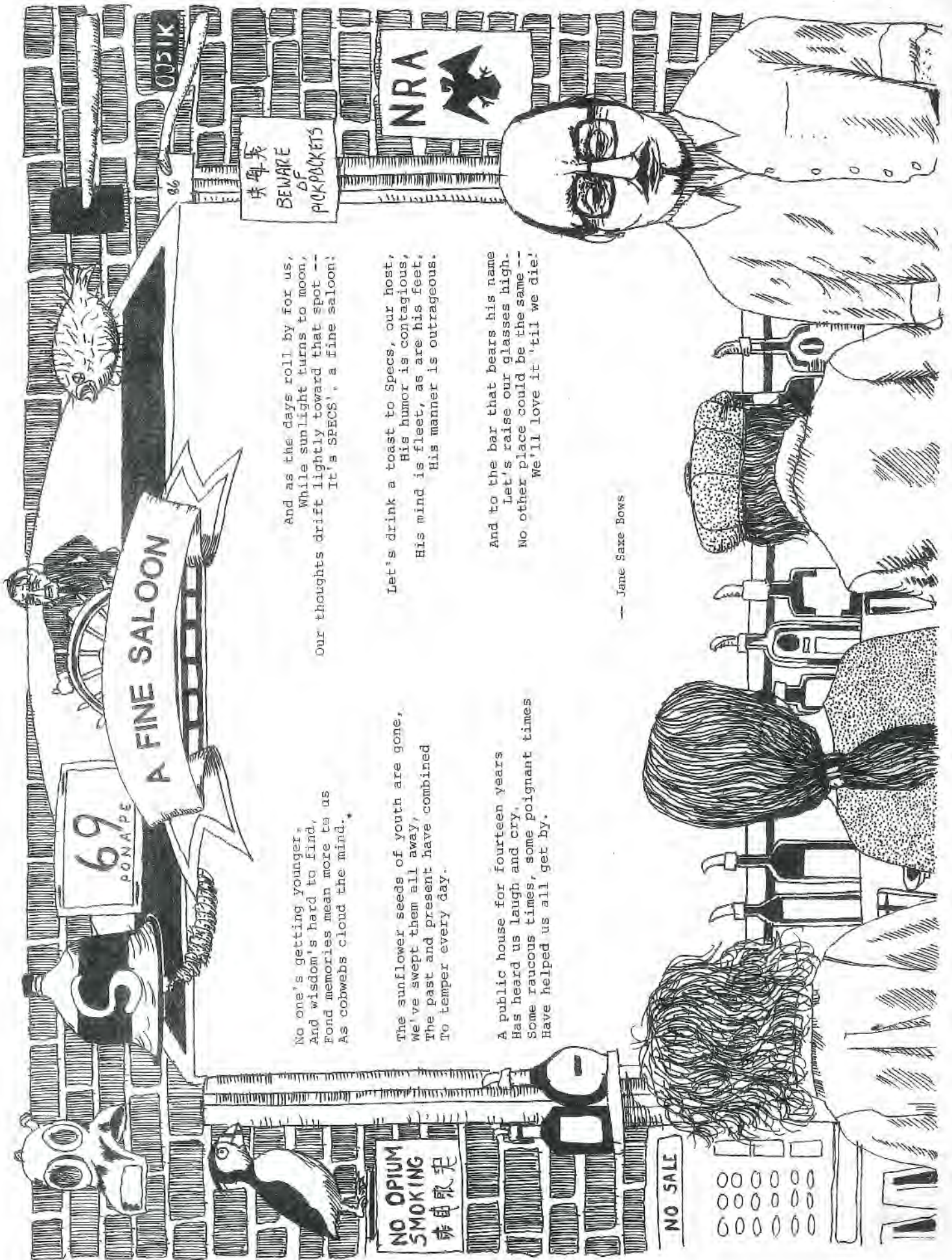
BOYS OF THE LOUGH SCOTTISH BAND



SPECS REGULARS DR. SAMIH BOUTROS  
+ VESUVIO BAR MANAGER JOSIE RAMOS



By SPECS' BARTENDER  
MICHAEL GRIM  
ARTWORK FOR ANNIVERSARY PARTY



And as the days roll by for us,  
 While sunlight turns to moon,  
 Our thoughts drift lightly toward that spot --  
 It's SPECS', a fine saloon!

Let's drink a toast to Specs, our host,  
 His humor is contagious,  
 His mind is fleet, as are his feet,  
 His manner is outrageous.

And to the bar that bears his name  
 Let's raise our glasses high--  
 No other place could be the same --  
 We'll love it 'til we die!

No one's getting younger,  
 And wisdom's hard to find,  
 Fond memories mean more to us  
 As cobwebs cloud the mind.

The sunflower seeds of youth are gone,  
 We've swept them all away,  
 The past and present have combined  
 To temper every day.

A public house for fourteen years  
 Has heard us laugh and cry,  
 Some raucous times, some poignant times  
 Have helped us all get by.

— Jane Saxe Bows

*Filing Date:* June 20, 2016  
*Case No.:* 2016-008471LBR  
*Business Name:* Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café  
*Business Address:* 12 Williams Place/12 Saroyan Alley  
*Zoning:* NCD (Broadway Neighborhood Commercial)/  
65-A-1 Height and Bulk District  
*Block/Lot:* 0162/024  
*Applicant:* Elly & Richard Simmons, Owners  
12 Saroyan Alley  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Stephanie Cisneros - (415) 575-9186  
stephanie.cisneros@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

## **BUSINESS DESCRIPTION**

Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café is a neighborhood bar and museum serving the North Beach neighborhood on Williams Place/Saroyan Alley off of Columbus Avenue. It is located at the basement floor of a three-story-over-basement, mixed-use building that was previously used as a saloon as noted in the 1915 Sanborn map. The bar was founded in 1968 by Elly and Richard "Specs" Simmons originally as a union bar (Local 2) that has transformed over time and become one of North Beach's most storied bars and is also one of San Francisco's oddest little museums, housing a truly bizarre collection of ephemera.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### ***Review Criteria***

1. *When was business founded?*

1968

2. *Is the business unique to San Francisco?*

Yes. The business is unique to San Francisco in the integral role it played and continues to play in the bohemian nature of the North Beach neighborhood as well as the idea that the bar itself is comprised of the collections of objects that make it a museum. These collections include, but are not limited to, Inuit and Haida art, San Francisco historical photographs and antiques, World War II and Spanish Civil War posters, whaling history antiquities, and flags brought from all over the world by merchant marines.

3. *Is the business associated with culturally significant events?*

No.

4. *Is the business associated with culturally significant persons?*

No.

5. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*

No.

6. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?*

Yes. The 1911 property at 12 Williams Place has been previously evaluated by the Planning Department for potential historical significance. The property is considered a "Category A Property" for its association with LGBTQ history as one of two lesbian-owned bar in the 1950s, prior to the establishment of Spec's Twelve Adler Place Museum Café. The two lesbian-owned bars were named Tommy's Place (529 Broadway) and 12 Adler Place.

7. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No.

8. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

Spec's Twelve Adler Place Museum Café is not mentioned in a local context statement, however, the building in which the Spec's Twelve Adler Place Museum Café is located is mentioned in the LGBTQ Historic Context Statement, adopted in November 2015.

9. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. The Examiner, 8/19/2003, "Spec's illustrious 75<sup>th</sup>," by Warren Hinckle; Heyday, 11/19/2015, "Q & A with 'High Spirits' author J. K. Dineen" by Mariko Conner; San Francisco's Best Dive Bars: Drinking and Diving in the City by the Bay, 2004, *Spec's*, by Todd Dayton; "San Francisco Chronicle, "Viewing 'Life' in Real Barroon," by Gerald Nachman.

### ***Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business***

#### **Recommended by Applicant**

- Museum collection objects including art, flags, etc.
- Brick walls that are of the original brick of the building, which was built in 1855 and rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake

#### **Additional Recommended by Staff**

- Bar
- Entry door
- Projecting business sign above entry



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Historic Preservation Commission Resolution No. 768

HEARING DATE: JULY 20, 2016

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

Fax:  
**415.558.6409**

Planning  
Information:  
**415.558.6377**

*Case No.:* 2016-008471LBR  
*Business Name:* Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café  
*Business Address:* 12 Williams Place/12 Saroyan Alley  
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*Nominated By:* Supervisor Aaron Peskin, District 3  
*Staff Contact:* Stephanie Cisneros - (415) 575-9186  
stephanie.cisneros@sfgov.org  
*Reviewed By:* Tim Frye - (415) 575-6822  
tim.frye@sfgov.org

**ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR SPECS' TWELVE ADLER MUSEUM CAFÉ, CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 12 WILLIAMS PLACE/12 SAROYAN ALLEY (BLOCK/LOT 0162/024).**

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business has contributed to the North Beach neighborhood's history and identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the subject business is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on July 20, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Specs' Twelve Adler Museum Café qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) and recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions.

*Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business*

- *Museum collection objects including art, flags, etc.*
- *Brick walls that are of the original brick of the building, which was built in 1855 and rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake*
- *Bar*
- *Entry door*
- *Projecting business sign above entry*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2016-008471LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on July 20, 2016.



Christine L. Silva  
Acting Commission Secretary

AYES: Hyland, Hasz, Johnck, Johns, Pearlman, Matsuda, Wolfram

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: July 20, 2016