

## Men South of Market

Written January 1977, this press-release essay was composed at the request of photographer Jim Stewart, and published in *Drummer* 14, April 1977.

- I. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written September 6, 2007
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### I. Author's Eyewitness Historical-Context Introduction written September 6, 2007

We were all men South of Market.

*Drummer* was very DIY.

Just like the young Thoreau himself building his ten-by-fifteen-foot cabin with his own hands.

With my contributions to *Drummer* listed in the "Timeline Index," these four items show how, in my presence as editor in chief at *Drummer* from March 1977, I began to break the surface as a ghost-editor, ghost-producer, and ghost-writer before permitting my name to be signed in *Drummer* 19.

In *Drummer* 14 (April 1977), my first formal writing, producing, and ghost-writing was the small press release and photo spread, "Men South of Market."

My second writing, producing, and ghost-writing in *Drummer* was for the issue containing my three varietal pieces, "Stunning Omission," "Cock Casting," and "Durk Parker" aka Durk Dehner in *Drummer* 15 (May 1977).

My third writing, producing, and ghost-editing was for the issue with my two pieces, "Tom Hinde Portfolio," and the photo-feature for Jim Stewart's "Johnny Gets His Hair Cut" in *Drummer* 16 (June 1977).

My fourth entry as producer and ghost-editor was the photo-feature in *Drummer* 17 (July 1977), "Dungeons of San Francisco," for which I brought together three of my best friends: the leather priest Jim Kane

and his lover, the former pro-football player Ike Barnes, and my traveling companion Gene Weber.

Having traveled on a Harley-Davidson road trip from Denver to Taos in June 1969 with Jim Kane, I traveled with Gene Weber to both Japan in 1975 and the Caribbean in 1976. I published Weber's underwater photographs of our scuba group fisting deep in the waters of the Cayman Islands in my "Gay Jock Sports" feature in *Drummer* 20 (January 1978).

In addition to my general editorial and re-write work on *Drummer* 18 which included my byline on "The Leatherneck Bar," these seven photo-and-art pieces in four issues are eyewitness of my first efforts to turn *Drummer* from a troubled Los Angeles magazine into a responsive San Francisco magazine featuring the esthetic voice and erotic eye of Folsom Street. To do so, I created for *Drummer* a San Francisco stable of talent from my circle of friends whose participation gave confidence to other talent still hiding in the closet. This was what publisher John Embry indicated he wanted me to do when he hired me in March 1977 to become editor in chief, a title that appeared first attached to my signed name on the masthead of *Drummer* 19 (December 1977).

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There were only two people named editor in chief of *Drummer*: founding Los Angeles editor in chief Jeanne Barney (21 months: 4/1975-12/31/1976), and founding San Francisco editor in chief Jack Fritscher (3 years/34 months: 3/1977-12/31/79).

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Harold Cox, publisher of *Checkmate Incorporating DungeonMaster*, wrote that "The tentative Los Angeles *Drummer*, reporting news about the uptight 1975-1976 LA leather scene, did not become an integrated *de facto* 'sex magazine' until Fritscher in San Francisco refashioned the *Drummer* writing, drawings, and photographs into frank erotica the readers could jerk off to."

What I did to virilize *Drummer* was add realism to the magical thinking of *Drummer* readers who wanted a magazine that made newly liberated sex seem possible and accessible. What they wanted they saw in the media image of themselves come alive in my *verite* pages reflecting what they really did at night. Sex sells. *Drummer* went from regional LA camp and drag (*Drummer* 9) to the international emerging soul of leather. It went from a two-handed magazine to a one-handed journal of erotic documentary of the way we leathermen were.

In the zero degrees of separation, director Gene Weber and I frequently worked together on his film projects, and I sometimes acted for

him in front of his camera, appearing with Russell Van Leer in *Blood Crucifixion* (1977).

Gene Weber's multi-media film work has been archived since his death at the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco.

As a kind of jokey internal signature, because *Drummer* 17, the second anniversary issue, had not yet been sophisticated to include a byline for "producer," I appeared—like Alfred Hitchcock signing his films by walking through a scene—in the Weber photograph at the top of page 11.

In the zero degrees of separation within our *Drummer* salon, my first "author's byline" in *Drummer* appeared in *Drummer* 18 (August 1977) at the top of my article, "The Leatherneck Bar," featuring photos, again, by my longtime friend and roommate Jim Stewart. (My first bylines as a writer were nineteen years earlier for my short story, "Timothy and the Shamrocks," in the bi-weekly national news magazine, *The Josephinum Review*, March 12, 1958, and for my poem in *America Sings: The Anthology of College Poetry 1958*.)

Our first-generation salon around *Drummer* was a crowd of cordial, and mostly Catholic, artists and writers, ex-pats from the Midwest and Manhattan. Jim Stewart was raised in the Church of Christ and, like the Catholic Mapplethorpe, tucked glimpses of Christianity into his photographs. In the Titanic 1970s, before gay lib turned into divisive gay politics, we weren't horn-locking male "arteests" aping Gauguin and Van Gogh who cut off his ear in a quarrel over which whore liked him best. Gay San Francisco, especially in the early art scene South of Market was more supportive than competitive.

As both *Drummer* editor in chief and as Robert Mapplethorpe's bi-coastal lover, I was eyewitness to a certain jealous evolution: competition among SoMa artists did not really ignite until after Mapplethorpe—who exhibited at Fey-Way Gallery—rose up out of gay ghetto art and began to become an international, and rich, artist celebrity. Dancing to remember, I detailed the minuet in our SoMa salon in "Take 10" and "Take 11" of the book, *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera* (1994), pages 138-166.

In the 1970s, during the leather virilization of the pre-lib sissy stereotype, it was *de rigueur* for gay male artists to have a female muse on their arms. Robert Mapplethorpe in New York had writer-singer Patti Smith as well as bodybuilder Lisa Lyon as his. (My 1977 intuition of Patti Smith's relationship to Robert is a fantasy of her singing a cover of the perfect short-story poem in *Hair*, "I Met a Boy Named Frank Mills.")

In San Francisco, the poet-singer, Camille O'Grady, an immigrant from Greenwich Village and CBGB and the Mineshaft, showed us what

was the “state of being” when a gay man lives inside a woman’s body which is somehow the opposite of the drag x-ray of a woman trapped inside a male body. Camille O’Grady wrote all her rock poetry and punk songs, like “Toilet Kiss,” from a gay-male point of view. Robert Opel installed her as resident muse for Fey-Way. The extraordinarily beautiful Camille O’Grady became the central SoMa muse for the bunch of us leather photographers and homomasculine gender journalists playing South of Market and filling *Drummer*.

Jim Stewart (born November 11, 1942) photographed Camille O’Grady in an extraordinary series of black-and-white shots punning on Catholic iconography with crucifix and rosary. Even in the quick “Camille” portrait photos which I shot from the hip during my April 17, 1979, interview with her, Camille had “It.” At that same interview, my lover David Sparrow as my backup photographer for *Drummer* added in several photos of Camille and me together, lounging about with Robert Opel, the founding owner of the South of Market Fey-Way Gallery. Performance artist Opel was always O’Grady’s main man, and none of us had a clue that my April 17 shoot would be the last photographs of the power couple shot together. On Sunday evening, July 8, 1979, a gunman broke into the Fey-Way Gallery, demanding money, and threatening to kill Camille O’Grady in lieu of cash. When daredevil Robert Opel who had streaked the Oscars in 1974 foolishly dared to resist, the gunman shot him dead.

Jim Stewart shot the salon portrait of “Robert Opel Contemplating a Skull” that I published with Opel’s eulogy on the last page of *Drummer* 31 (September 1979).

Within such an unfolding *mise en scene*, I drafted this bit of “Men South of Market” editorial-advertising copy to promote Jim Stewart and his Keyhole Studio in a runup to doing the same for the Leatherneck bar owned by my other roommate, Allan Lowery, in *Drummer* 18 (August 1977). In my freelance writing business in the 1970s, I wrote copy to create “brand names” for the “emerging new gay advertising” of “emerging new gay businesses” South of the Slot, such as “The Wizard’s Emerald City” at 1645 Market Street which was owned by the darkly handsome Richard Trask, star of the fisting film classic *Erotic Hands* (1974). My text introduced the photographs of Jim Stewart at the moment he first presented them to *Drummer*.

This press release, similar to my gallery release on my playmate, the artist Tom Hinde, in *Drummer* 16, typifies the kind of thumbnail then given to artists at their first exhibitions. Upgrading *Drummer*, I wanted to present these talented people as artists first and as “hot” second.

A good example is my special “New York art” issue, *Son of Drummer* (September 1978), in which I presented Mapplethorpe in nine photographs, the pointillist artist Rex in five drawings, Lou Thomas of Target Studio in eleven photographs, and Bob Hefron in seven photographs. As an aside to the featured artists, I filled the issue with “Sparrow-Fritscher” as “Sparrow” in a proof sheet of thirty-five photographs, and “Fritscher” solo in two “film strips” of eight photographs.

This *Drummer* 14 Stewart photo-spread buoyed by the simultaneous “happening” of Jim Stewart’s show, “Men South of Market,” led to publication of three pages of six of his photographs, titled “Johnny Gets His Hair Cut!” in *Drummer* 17 (June 1977), the second anniversary issue. In *Drummer* 17, Jim Stewart’s name as photographer was added to the *Drummer* contents page. On October 11, 2007, Jim Stewart wrote:

Dear Jack,

Here are my three contact sheets of the Shoot @ the Slot. There is one negative of me missing—I clipped it for a fan somewhere along the line. I took most of these photos but somebody took the ones of me, obviously, and it was you, Jack, as I remember you rolling around on your back on the floor in that green nylon flight-suit like you were shooting for an Antonioni film! Very David Hemmings in *Blow-Up*. Ah sweet bird of youth. We were all such exhibitionists and voyeurs.

—Jim [See Jim Stewart quote in the introduction to “Johnny Gets His Hair Cut” in this book.]

The addition of a name to the *Drummer* masthead meant that the freelance photographer, artist, or writer had contributed once and might do so again; but it did not necessarily mean that everyone listed was on the *Drummer* staff or was receiving any kind of salary or was part of the in-crowd. Some people like the first publisher John Embry and his virtual “indentured servant” John Rowberry were functionaries of *Drummer*, but were never part of the salon around *Drummer*. In the resulting drama, a civil war eventually broke out at *Drummer* after I exited *Drummer* December 31, 1979. In 1980, Embry and Rowberry forged an informal “Blacklist” to dictate who could and could not contribute to *Drummer*. (That Blacklist ended in *Drummer* itself when Embry sold the magazine and I returned to its pages in 1986. Fallout from that perceived Blacklist continued into the gaystream as Embry created new magazines and his apparatchiks moved to other gay publishing venues.)

The masthead is, nevertheless, kind of a permeable guide to the *Drummer* salon through December 31, 1979.

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List of Jim Stewart's Photo Art Shows  
during the Golden Age of SoMa

- "Hot Stuff," 1977, Jim Stewart's first show; sponsored by the South of Market Artists Association
  - "Men South of Market," 1977; Jim Stewart's first exhibition at the Ambush Bar
  - "Double Exposure," 1978, Jim Stewart with Gregg Coates and Max Morales, Keyhole Studio, 766 Clementina Street; Stewart shot the urinals pictured on the invitation inside Allan Lowery's Leatherneck bar on Folsom
  - "Jim Stewart - Photos," 1979; his second Ambush show
  - "Town and Country," 1982; Jim Stewart's last show in San Francisco
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Almost every deal at *Drummer* was done "in trade." *Drummer* wanted photos; Stewart wanted publicity. The deal was done; no money changed hands. Even though that blurred the strictly editorial separation from advertising, that's where I came in as copyrighting publicist and then as editor in chief to transmorph the deal into provocative editorial entertainment whose goal was to cause orgasm.

Because of "creative differences" and "lack of payment" from Embry, some freelance photographers, artists, and writers who were listed demanded that their names be removed from the masthead as I did upon my New Year's Eve exit. This seemed to happen much to Embry's chagrin because he wanted the masthead to give the impression he had a stable of talent rivaling *Playboy*. Demand for payment usually meant the writer or photographer moved from the masthead to the Blacklist.

Fleeing LA and a bust by the LAPD, Embry hired me, literally, an hour after we met in mid-March, 1977, at my home on 25<sup>th</sup> Street. We were introduced by my longtime intimate, Allen J. Shapiro aka A. Jay, whom Embry had hired two weeks earlier as art director. A. Jay presented us as a "can-do" team. I began ghost-editing *Drummer* in April, 1977.

Embry, new to San Francisco, wanted me—as much as he needed Al and me—to take over as founding San Francisco editor in chief, because he knew we knew the South of Market leather movers, shakers,

and fuckers who could help fill the pages of a hungry thirty-day beast. Anyone I didn't know, Al Shapiro did, and vice versa.

Embry hadn't a clue, nor did we at that moment, that we were about to re-conceptualize the potential that *Drummer* had frittered away in LA.

As an exorcist ordained by the Catholic Church, I took as my first mission the casting out of *Drummer* Embry's personal demons about the LAPD and about the *Drummer* "Slave Auction" arrests.

That molehill had become his mountain, and obsessive coverage of it was a boring waste of pages in *Drummer*.

On April 10, 1976, the bust of the "Slave Auction" was no Stonewall.

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By agreement with Embry and Shapiro, I put *Drummer* on a four-month hiatus without a single issue: August 1977 to December 1977.

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Embry needed a breather. From February 1977, through my hire in March 1977, until December 1977, he was virtually consumed with moving house and business from LA where he was still going to court over the *Drummer* arrests.

Leathermen and artists South of Market saw the arrival of *Drummer* as a new opportunity.

*Drummer* 17 (July 1977), the second anniversary issue, was one of several hybrid issues with both LA and San Francisco addresses on the masthead. It featured the lead article I produced, "Dungeons of San Francisco," showcasing Gene Weber's photographs of my two longtime pals Jim Kane and Ike Barnes in their dungeon on the first floor of their house at 11 Pink Alley, forty feet off Market Street near Pearl Street.

(It was in the Kane-Barnes playroom that Weber had lensed me for the photo on the top of page 11. David Sparrow and I, having lived with Kane-Barnes on 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Castro prior to their real estate purchase, helped them scrub, remodel, and paint 11 Pink Alley which was a second-floor garret over a street-level garage. In the way that men had to climb to the second floor of the Mineshaft to be able to go down the interior stairs to the "basement" on the street level, so did S&M tricks at Kane-Barnes have to climb the outside stairs to enter the living space, and then, lifting the secret trapdoor in the kitchen floor, climb back down to the street level of the Kane-Barnes playroom.)

*Drummer* 18, partially prepared in LA, was handed to me for massage and final edit (uncredited), and hit the bookstores in August 1977.

*Drummer* 18 was the last issue released during the hiatus of the next hundred days until I brought out *Drummer* 19 (December 1977) which was the first issue of *Drummer* listing “Jack Fritscher” as editor in chief on the masthead.

I had spent the summer and autumn of 1977 reading every word in every issue of *Drummer*, including the quintessential reader survey: the classified personals of the “Leather Fraternity.”

Meeting formally at tables at the Castro Café (one door north of the Star Pharmacy at 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro) and informally at bars and baths on Folsom, I interrogated the South of Market demographic of leathermen whom I knew in order to refocus concepts, contents, and on-going editorial “philosophy.” Besides lots of leather sex, I wanted to represent the then self-fashioning trend of virilizing gender that gay liberationists had not ever expected was in any closet. I wanted my *Drummer* to drum up the image of the under-served audience of masculine-identified gay males whom I personally witnessed marching in booted battalions through the streets and bike clubs of New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, London, Amsterdam, and Madrid.

We were a tribe. We were each and all *The Wild One* with *Scorpio Rising*. We were James Dean’s *Rebel without a Cause*. I eyewitnessed the action and identity we ritualized after midnight when we all went prowling for masters and slaves. The new San Francisco *Drummer* was my chance to give that specific group of men at that specific time a specific magazine of specific desires.

As a writer requiring vocabulary to describe this emerging male identity, I probed my six years of high-school and college Latin (six class hours a week) and my four years of Greek (four class hours a week). At the tip of my pen, the keyword *homomascularity* began to form in a drop of cum. Or was it blood? Or was it ink? The word evolved out of the way men self-fashioned themselves during witnessed acts of public sex and “Walt Whitman” comradeship.

Personal experience in face-to-face S&M sex led me to create a *Drummer* editorial policy reflecting on the pages the faces and psyches of its readers. Suddenly that summer, *Drummer* shifted to embrace masculine reality as well as leather fantasy. I became a gonzo journalist involved in the subject I was investigating: e.g., “Prison Blues” (*Drummer* 21), “Cowboys: Grand National Rodeo” (*Drummer* 26), and “The Academy Training Center” (*Drummer* 145). I wanted a men’s adventure magazine whose pages didn’t sound phony to reader-participants who cruised out at night looking for the real thing. That’s why I preferred eyewitness photographers like Jim Stewart who was first of all an artist who also was a real-time player in leather culture.

**Excerpt source:** ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Photographer Jim Stewart and I had been friends since 1973 when we both spent time in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where I commuted from San Francisco to teach for a number of years. He claims the underground world of leather opened for him in an epiphany one night when David Sparrow and I took him to his first bathhouse. At that time, in 1974, Jim Stewart lived with George Hale who—I thought, meaningfully—was a direct descendent of the brother of the handsome blue-eyed blond wrestler Nathan Hale, the young American martyr, who, hanged at age twenty-one by the British on September 22, 1776, pronounced his famous last words, “I regret I have only one life to lose for my country.”

Before the dumbing of America, connections like that had meaning in the six degrees of separation that *Drummer* readers liked, especially after the example of Allen Ginsberg who connected himself sexually to Neal Cassady who slept with Gavin Arthur who slept with Edward Carpenter who slept with Walt Whitman. Joining in that gay heritage, David Sparrow and I in 1970 had a life-linking three-way with poet Thom Gunn (1923-2004) who slept with Neal Cassady (1926-1968) who slept with...

As a *Drummer* aside: Jack Kerouac fictionalized the wildly masculine Cassady, who was famously hung big, as Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*; Ginsberg mentioned him in *Howl*; novelist Robert Stone re-created Cassady in *The Dog Soldiers* which director Karel Reisz made into the brilliant film *Who'll Stop the Rain* (1978) starring Nick Nolte and Tuesday Weld. It played for weeks at the Alhambra Theater on Polk Street where some of our *Drummer* squad went repeatedly to see the surrealistic film on acid because it brought us to heroic, romantic fears about our identity.

My thought is that Herman Melville had in mind the aura of Nathan Hale when he wrote *Billy Budd*. Perhaps this connection homosexualizes *Billy Budd* even more, so that gay culture, always eager to “out” history, might accord gay canonization of the never-married Hale who was so hot his statue deserves fucking worship or fucking and worship.

(In *Drummer 22* and *Drummer 23*, the trope underlying my drama, *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O'Malley*, leaned on Billy Budd and Captain Vere; Billy appeared again at the opening of the *Drummer* novel, *Some Dance to Remember*, page 13, Reel 1, Sequence 6.)

Less abstractly, I lived domestically with my twenty-four-year-old lover, David Sparrow—the handsome, freckled, redheaded son of Ray and Nellie Sparrow—who said, “How would you like to be an insecure boy soprano, and answer the family phone when the caller's first question is, *Nellie?*”

In August 1969, I had moved my David Sparrow from working for Chuck Renslow at the Gold Coast bar in Chicago to Kalamazoo so he could attend college where I taught and where I funded his tuition and

our commuter airplane tickets to San Francisco. In those days before gay liberation, when no one spoke of homosexuality, it was considered platonic and stylish in the open closet of academia to have one's lover also be one's student living under the same roof.

We were an arty little salon in Kalamazoo and we were about to become an arty salon in San Francisco. Jim Stewart was manager of the Campus Theater which was a commercial movie house not connected with Western Michigan University where I taught film and creative writing. In a freezing February 1973, I drove my tan Toyota Land Cruiser through huge snow drifts to meet Jim Stewart at his theater. On the telephone we had donned our professional disguises as the "film professor" and the "movie theater manager." Upon first meeting to arrange student screenings at student prices, gaydar instantly bonded us, and we exploded laughing at the big fat joke and the power it gave us to shape the taste of that open-hearted town with films by Andy Warhol, Kenneth Anger, the brothers George Kuchar and Mike Kuchar, and Jack Smith ("*Flaming Creatures*") tucked in among Bergman, Antonioni, Bunuel, and Fellini.

Had we known then that in four years we'd be creating together a magazine that did not yet exist, or that I'd be editor in chief of *Drummer* and he'd be managing the *Drummer* bar at 11<sup>th</sup> and Folsom—the heart of SoMa—for publisher Embry, we'd have said without any amazement, "Mais oui!"

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### The Longitude and Latitude of Tribal Identity in San Francisco

The intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> and Folsom was to leather culture what 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro was to gay culture. One was ground zero at midnight; the other was ground zero at noon.

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So, in the way of small, prosperous, and liberal towns, two gay men set out to coordinate cultural bookings at our three film venues—mine at the university and at the Genevieve and Donald Gilmore Art Center (Kalamazoo Institute of Arts), and Jim Stewart's at the Campus Theater. The adventure made us fast friends, but never sex partners. We both liked the same type—which in this instance was the ever-ready David Sparrow who was everyone's type. (David Sparrow and I were domestic partners from July 4, 1969 to March 17, 1979; we were married by the Catholic priest Jim Kane on a rooftop in Greenwich Village on David's twenty-seventh birthday, May 7, 1972; George Chauncey Agustinella was our best man.)

After David Sparrow and I migrated full-time to San Francisco, vowing we would stay together and do everything “except shoot up with needles,” the soft-spoken Jim Stewart, who was dark-haired with Mapplethorpean dark circles under his romantic eyes, telephoned long distance to announce he too was exiting Kalamazoo. Having never been to Mecca, he asked if he could move in with David and me. For his first six months in San Francisco, Jim Stewart lived with us at 4436 25<sup>th</sup> Street, and helped remodel my house and build my playroom dungeon. Made enthusiastic by the Castro-and-Folsom parade of handsome men, Jim Stewart picked up his Nikon with a brilliant purpose he had not had in Kalamazoo. He invented himself as Keyhole Studios and took his first photographs at our 25<sup>th</sup> Street house.

Rewinding the chronology exactly, Jim Stewart wrote to me on September 4, 2007:

My first photos at your house were shot on Bastille Day 1975 when I flew out to visit you before I moved to San Francisco. To insure that I would return to San Francisco, you pierced my ear in your kitchen before a guy picked me up for the airport. You told me, Jack, that our lives are like films and we are all our own directors. I too am such a determinist. I quit my job at the Campus Theater and moved to San Francisco around October 4, 1975.

Even before the Bicentennial, July 4, 1976, we had a thriving neo-hippie commune of artists which was the seed for creating a salon at *Drummer*. Another commune at the time was the salon lounging about the Hula Palace at 19<sup>th</sup> and Castro Street where, among others living there, were the singer Sylvester, and the artist Robert Kirk, also known as Cirby, whose work often appeared in *Drummer*. In the 1970s, Cirby was the star bartender at the Midnight Sun on Castro.

(For intricate details, see *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 2, Scene 4, to find more information on Robert Kirk, Sylvester, the Hula Palace, Harvey Milk, and how Castro Street grew. On May 7, 1989, I shot Robert Kirk for one of my Palm Drive Video features and clicked off more than a hundred photographs of him in fetish gear of his own choosing. Robert “Cirby” Kirk was born July 22, 1943, and died of AIDS on December 21, 1991.)

For “The Men South of Market” photo layout in *Drummer* 14, Jim Stewart lensed one of our sex pals, the very steamy Bill Essex. In the centerfold, Bill Essex is the hung model with beard and football helmet. After our rough sex that ended in a cum-gorgeous draw of “no surrender”

in a third-floor toilet at the Slot, Bill Essex became my friend and training partner when the San Francisco Sheriff's Department first recruited gay men to become deputy sheriffs. Jim Stewart recalled:

I remember a man, an off-duty San Francisco deputy sheriff, coming into the shop at the bar wanting to buy issue 14 of *Drummer*. It had my naked photos of his fellow deputy, Bill Essex, in it. Bill had told him to buy that issue as a preview of the treat he held in store for him.

There exists a previously unrevealed timeline of leather history in San Francisco. In 1976, the San Francisco Deputy Sheriff issued a Civil Service Commission call for gay recruits. Nearly a thousand straight and gay men and women took the physical, emotional, and IQ tests. I passed as Candidate #11, with a little help from a very handsome, straight, uniformed, moustached sheriff who during the physical testing (October 16, 1976) held my shins down with his big hands and his big biceps while I ground out a next to impossible hundred sit ups. (Rudi Cox became the first openly gay deputy sheriff in San Francisco and in the U. S.) During the following year, 1977, I turned down that deputy sheriff position on all three occasions that the very nice lesbian deputy sheriff offered it to me. During the same week, both she and Embry tried to recruit me. She sat in the same chair in my house that Embry sat in to hire me for *Drummer*. Upon my turning the sheriff's job down the third time (in order to take on *Drummer*), the position went to Candidate #12 on the list.

The hardcore temptation to be a deputy sheriff was as romantic as it was sociological, but I was more realistic. At the same workaholic instant, I also had a permanent and wonderful job writing engineering proposals and managing my own marketing staff of a dozen writers at a major corporation while at the same time I was editing and writing *Drummer*.

For me, declining the deputy position probably saved my life because when steroids were first released in the 1970s, oral and injectable steroids became the most used and abused drug among gay men who admitted using every drug in the world, but never steroids. Because Arnold Schwarzenegger, Pete Grymkowski, and the Venice Beach bodybuilding set bulked up, the first homosexuals to swallow and shoot steroids were, in my opinion of the gossip at the time, some of the gay men recruited to be San Francisco deputy sheriffs: a deputy had to be big enough to throw his weight around. As a result, many of the first to die of HIV were that first wave of gay deputy sheriffs—partly due to the steroids themselves, but mostly due to their ignorance in sharing needles to inject the steroids. Gay deputy sheriffs who only took oral steroids fairly much escaped alive.

**Excerpt source:** ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness](#)  
[Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

When Jim Stewart moved from my 25<sup>th</sup> Street home, he rented a flat “South of the Slot.” (The term “South of the Slot” defines the area south of the Market Street cable car slot—a literal slot in the middle of Market Street—which pulled cable cars east and west along Market Street, from the Ferry Building up to the Castro.) When David Sparrow and I loaded his stuff into his GMC pickup truck and my Toyota Land Cruiser, and drove him to 766 Clementina Street, Jim Stewart was one of the many guys to move South of Market, marking a psychological shift of personal investment more than simply slumming down to SoMa after midnight. Even though we all closed our eyes at how unhygienic was the Barracks or, especially, the Slot, my inner clean queen thought his old building (constructed after the 1906 quake) too ratty and roach infested, but it was centrally located for gay men not wanting to support a car, and for an artist seeking hot-and-cold running models. As 1970s leather identity grew, Jim Stewart and Robert Opel followed the earlier 1960s pioneers who had settled SoMa.

They mirrored the bohemian lead of Chuck Arnett, the dominant artist of Folsom Street who displayed his graffiti mural-art as majestically as a stone-age Druid on the stonewall of his gay bar, the Tool Box, because, he said, “Galleries are funeral parlors for artwork.” Arnett’s mural had been featured in *Life* magazine, June 26, 1964, five years before Stonewall, and his images drew, literally, millions of queer, faggot, gay, leather “sex tourists” from around the world to SoMa. Many of the early leather-sex pioneers were, as was I, university academics—the *luxe* class who had the most time to travel between semesters. Some of them were artists and writers and photographers and models and they were hungry for a magazine like *Drummer*. As early as *Drummer* 4 (January 1976), Robert Opel had pegged Arnett as “Lautrec in Leather.” Life on Folsom was our leather *La Boheme*. In the 1960s and 1970s, we lived and fucked and loved in those falling-down workingmen’s hotels reshaped into bars and baths and garrets where finally in the 1980s, coughing, selling earrings for medicine in Tijuana (like *Drummer* model and HIV-activist Richard Locke), we died in droves.

My press release for Jim Stewart references the already ongoing existence of the SoMa Open Studio movement (and the South of Market Artists Association) that had begun with Chuck Arnett and Bill Tellman who drew the ethereal “Valium-Blue Poster” for the Slot Hotel (1971), and Mike Caffee who created the sculpture of the *Leather David* (1966) for Fe-Be’s bar. (For the magical conjure value of Caffee’s “Leather David,” see “Sex and Witchcraft” in *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch’s Mouth* (1972, 2005), page 153.

The press release also references Jim Stewart's photographs of Christo's "Running Fence." This was a very huge work of conceptual art that thrilled the Bay Area, and the world, for two weeks in September 1976. Christo's enormous sculpture of fabric panels was eighteen-feet tall and stretched from inland Sonoma County, not far from my house in the country, and through Marin County twenty-five miles west into the ocean. It must have given Christo great satisfaction that every camera in the world focused on the photo op of his billowing ephemeral fence.

In the zero degrees of separation within gay heritage, panels from the Christo fence were chosen by *Boys in the Sand* director Wakefield Poole to decorate the interior of the famous "Night Flight" party he produced in San Francisco, New Year's Eve, as 1977 became 1978. (See *Drummer* 20, January 1978.)

I am not Lot's wife in Sodom, so I can turn back and look.

In my personal rear-view mirror, the white panels on Christo's "Running Fence" may have waved like flags on the ship of the Titanic 1970s; but ultimately, I see in time lapse how those white panels unnecessarily became a shroud, morphing into the panels of the AIDS Quilt which has also been displayed famously for the world to look at and wonder.

Finally, I will always be eternally grateful to my pal Jim Stewart for introducing me in May 1976 to one of the greatest talents I ever discovered for *Drummer*: my longtime dearest friend David Hurles aka Old Reliable Studio, a pioneer in the SoMa art scene. Hurles' introduction to this book, "A Thousand Light Years Ago," reveals the helix axis of the way we were at the moment *Drummer* was invented. In the zero degrees of separation, the genesis is this: deputy sheriff Bill Essex introduced Hurles to Jim Stewart who introduced Hurles to me who introduced Hurles' work into the gaystream of popular culture where his homomasculine photography and video beat down the resistant sissy domination of media and became legendary.

After six months' talking two hours every day on the telephone, David Hurles and I first met face to face at his SoMa apartment at 10<sup>th</sup> and Mission Street, kitty-corner from the Doggie Diner owned by my family's friend, Carl Mohn. (Our adopted "Uncle Carl" never realized how popular his chain of restaurants was with hustlers and johns.) Hurles' work was brilliant, sexy, and best of all as real as the high standard of masculine *verite* that I was setting for *Drummer*.

David Hurles was something altogether new.

It was my good fortune as editor and talent scout that every other gay magazine had refused to publish Old Reliable's dangerous photographs of ex-cons, rough-trade hustlers, and graduates of some of the best Youth Authorities in the American South. When I published Old Reliable in the

pages of *Drummer* 21, he exploded into gay pop culture. Readers shouted for more. His hyper-masculine eye raised the bar of gay photography, made way for Mapplethorpe who collected Hurles' Old Reliable photographs, and changed the way virile gay men looked at themselves and the objects of their desire.

While Jim Stewart lived in San Francisco during the Golden Age from 1976 to 1982, he worked as a artist-photographer building a community salon South of Market with other artists such as David Hurles, Tom Hinde, Robert Opel, Camille O'Grady, Chuck Arnett, Gregg Coates, Max Morales, and Larry Hunt, the Mapplethorpe model who was murdered. Like "Old Reliable" Hurles, Rex, and Robert Opel at Fey-Way Gallery, Jim Stewart opened his own SoMa studio, Keyhole, at 766 Clementina Street with a literally underground mailing address in the basement at 768-A Clementina Street.

Having established his Folsom Street "cred" and reputation with his photos in *Drummer*, he was later employed by publisher Embry to manage the *Drummer* Key Club bar and swimming pool at 11<sup>th</sup> and Folsom Street (1981-1982) in the location that had been the Leatherneck bar.

Embry dubbed the venture the "*Drummer* Key Club" to ape Hugh Hefner's Playboy Club. See the pre-opening display ad in *Drummer* 40 (November 1980), page 48. Hefner had *Playboy* Bunnies, and Embry had Mr. *Drummer* contestants for centerfolds. "After the International Mister Leather contest in Chicago in 1981," Jim Stewart recalls, "Embry returned and announced he was changing the name of the bar to the 'Gold Coast' [spinning off the brand name of Chuck Renslow's venerable Gold Coast bar in Chicago]. See *Drummer* 46 (June 1981), inside front cover. By March 1982, the bar was closed."

Jim Stewart also wrote fiction for publisher Jim Moss who started up *Folsom* magazine in 1981; that glossy alternative that employed so many disaffected and often unpaid contributors to *Drummer* went belly up after several issues.

Knowledgeable in the way the real world does business, Jim Stewart remains rather shocked at the way *Drummer* did gay business, and how — as even word on the street knew — it often stiffed contributors and employees on pay day. He is an eyewitness whose *Rashomon* recall, which is his alleged opinion, he described to me in an email on September 21, 2007:

Dear Jack,

Working for John Embry [from LA] and Mario Simon [his lover from Spain] at their "*Drummer* Key Club" bar was a trip. Their

heads didn't really seem to be into running a bar/swim club. Their ideas seemed to fit more into Southern California than San Francisco, South of Market. For instance, the leather shop in the bar had one mannequin to display leather harnesses, etc. It was a surfer boy. I convinced John to let me trade it in for two male mannequins that looked more like they belonged in an SF leather bar. John would sometimes call meetings of the bar staff for suggestions. However, he was very reluctant to follow through on any of them.

Either the two of them had no head for finance or they were working very close to the bone or both. I used to walk the previous night's cash receipts complete with tapes, paid bills, etc. over to *Drummer* offices on, was it Natoma?—in a bank bag. John would either say—just put it down over there—or—just give it to Mario. In either case, I never saw anybody ever count it to verify what was what. It sure was not like I had been taught by the scrupulous Butterfield Theater Chain when I managed the Campus Theater.

You must remember that when I worked for John and Mario in 1980-1982, these were the days before banks had widespread computer use and instant deposit.

When payday rolled around Mario would take the cash and deposit it in a branch bank way out in the Avenues [out toward the ocean and far from South of Market] just before John would write the paychecks. If you took your paycheck to the main branch downtown, the record of the deposit would not have been received and the account would be underfunded to cash the paychecks. If you waited a day or two and all paychecks were cashed, someone usually came up short. John would apologize and sometimes cash it himself, or tell you to go back to the bank again as Mario had just made another deposit. What a way to run a business. Well, Max Morales and I finally figured out what was happening. We'd try to predict Mario's moves and would get on Max's BMW motorcycle and go over to the branch bank in the Avenues to cash our checks. An added bonus of going to the bank in the Avenues—there was a great butcher shop just across the street from the bank—much better than anything I could get at the Dented Can grocery South of Market.

Let me know if I can help you with anything else with your book endeavor. Since I have seriously started writing, I realize how much work is really involved.

—Jim Stewart

After the burning of the Barracks Baths on Folsom Street in July 1981 which signaled the end of the Titanic 1970s in SoMa, Jim Stewart moved in 1982 to Chicago where he undertook doctoral studies at the University of Illinois and became Head of the History Department at the Chicago Public Library.

He has written: "The fusing of sex and art was what South of Market was all about in the 1970s."

Retired, he lives in Michigan and is author of the forthcoming fiction collection about the 1970s sex-and-art life South of Market, *Clementina Tales*.

## II. The press-release essay as published in *Drummer* 14, April 1977

### Introducing photographer Jim Stewart...

## Men South of Market

Jim Stewart of Keyhole Studio in San Francisco has recently hung One-Man Shows at the Ambush bar, and currently is hanging on the walls of the Catacombs. His photographs of Christo's "Running Fence" will open in the fall at the Galeria Vandes in Madrid.

His work will be on public display at his studio at 768-A Clementina as part of the South of Market Open Studio.

Jim lives in the South of Market area and does much of his photography in that neighborhood, and at various locations ranging from Mount Tam to the Slot Hotel. On one side of our new centerfold are a few shots from his show "Men South of Market." Jim promises heavier examples for future spreads to follow this jock issue.

When not behind his Nikon, Jim does construction and carpentry work around San Francisco. His Keyhole Studios also makes prints of his exciting work available by mail.

## III. Eyewitness Illustrations

"Gallery Invitation," Jim Stewart,  
Keyhole Studios, 1977. ©Jim Stewart.  
Used with permission.

“Bill Essex,” June 1976, Mount Tamalpais. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Bill Essex and his training partner Jack Fritscher were two of the first gay men to be recruited, tested (October 16, 1976:9:48AM), and accepted (March 4, 1977) as candidates for the Class 8304 Deputy Sheriff for the City and County of San Francisco. During that week of March 4, 1977, Jack Fritscher was hired as editor in chief of *Drummer*. Powerful man's man Bill Essex was also the doorman-bouncer at the Leatherneck.

©Jack Fritscher

"Arranging the Deck Chairs in the Titanic 1970s," Leatherneck Bar, August 1977, 11th Street and Folsom Street. Leatherneck bar publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

©Jack Fritscher

“Camille O’Grady with Skull,” 1979, *Drummer* salon portrait shot in Keyhole Studios, San Francisco. Fey-Way publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

©Jack Fritscher

“Robert Opel with Skull,” 1978, *Drummer* salon portrait shot in Keyhole Studios, San Francisco, published in Opel’s obituary in *Drummer* 31 (September 1979). Fey-Way publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

© Jack Fritscher

“Max Morales,” 1977, photographed during lensing of the “Four Seasons of Ass Series” (after Alphonse Mucha) shot in Keyhole Studios as large-size advertising posters for the Leatherneck bar, one of which helped make *Drummer* 21 (March 1978) the most perfect issue of *Drummer*. Leatherneck bar publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

Top: "Three Toilets," Gallery Invitation, "Double Exposure Exhibit," Jim Stewart, Gregg Coates and Max Morales, 1978, when South of Market was "S. O. M." on the cusp of becoming the new word *SoMa*. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission. Bottom: "Bound Feet" and "Bound Hands," model Luc Alexandre, both shot at the Geysers, Sonoma County, California, 1978. Both photographs by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

**Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008**

© Jack Fritscher

“Camille O’Grady Bead-azzled with Cat o’ Nine Tails,” *Drummer* salon portrait lensed in Keyhole Studios, 1979; poster for Jim Stewart exhibition at the Ambush bar, 1979. Ambush bar publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)**

“Camille O’Grady, Bell, Book and Candle,” 1979, shot in Keyhole Studios, San Francisco. Keyhole Studios publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Bottom: “Trash,” and “High Heel Tango” 1979, featuring the hip of Max Morales and the high heel of “Pillow” who performed regularly together in their erotic dance act at a North Beach strip club. Both photographs shot on location at the Leatherneck bar, San Francisco. Keyhole Studios publicity kit. Photographs by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

© Jack Fritscher

“Crucifixion Bondage,” 1977. This photograph is the center frame of a triptych featuring reversed on the left and on the right, “Crucifixion: Rocky, the Bartender,” 1977. Shot in the Leatherneck bar. Photographs and montage by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

“Crucifixion: Rocky, the Bartender,” *Drummersalon* portrait shot in the Leatherneck bar, 1977. Leatherneck bar publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

©Jack Fritscher

Top: "Jack Fritscher and David Sparrow," Fritscher-Sparrow House, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1969. Auto-photograph by Fritscher-Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. Bottom: "Ike Barnes and Jim Kane," Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1972. Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

© Jack Fritscher

Top: Test Results, City and County of San Francisco, Civil Service Commission, certifying Jack Fritscher finishing as candidate #11 for Deputy Sheriff, March 4, 1977. This career in law enforcement was offered at the same time Fritscher was offered the position of editor in chief of *Drummer*. Bottom: “Max Morales: Nude Gunning Motorcycle through Leatherneck Bar,” August 1977, interior 11th Street and Folsom Street, homage to Kenneth Anger and *Scorpio Rising*. Leatherneck bar publicity kit. Photograph by Jim Stewart. ©Jim Stewart. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

“Psychedelic Leatherman 1960s,” colorful Day-Glow blacklight-reactive painting; unsigned; possibly by Chuck Arnett who painted the legendary mural at his Tool Box bar (1963); from the Jack Fritscher and Mark Hemry Collection. Photograph by Mark Hemry. ©Mark Hemry

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *[Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#)*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Invitation, Fey-Way Studios. This group show of twenty artists signifies the salon around Fey-Way that was part of the salon around *Drummer*: Tom Hinde, Robert Mapplethorpe, Bill Tellman and Chuck Arnett, Jim Stewart, and Robert Opel himself. Others included: S. Clay Wilson, Ed Chaney, Rick Borg. Not everyone who was published in *Drummer* or who worked for *Drummer*, or even owned *Drummer*, was part of the *Drummer* salon. Fritscher's eyewitness peek into a typical Fey-Way opening night was published in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 3, Sequence 1; the *Drummer* salon appeared in Reel 3, Sequence 3.

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

Cover. *Man2Man Quarterly* #6 (Spring 1981). Cover photograph by David Hurles (Old Reliable). ©David Hurles. Used with permission. *Man2Man Quarterly* was a “Virtual *Drummer*” publishing fiction, articles, photographs, and drawings that had become too edgy for *Drummer* beginning in 1980 when publisher John Embry allowed the Mr. *Drummer* contest to wag the magazine, and new “assignments editor” John Rowberry turned to corporate video companies for slick photographs to replace the grass-roots photographs of readers that *Drummer* had reveled in during the 1970s. David Hurles, the photographer known as Old Reliable, was first published by Fritscher in *Drummer*, and moved with Fritscher to *Man2Man*. Six Old Reliable photographs, including front and back cover, appeared in *Man2Man Quarterly* #6.

**Excerpt source:** ©[Jack Fritscher](#), *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

“Dore Street, Earthquake, 1906,” site of the fabled Dore Alley Street Fair, between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> streets, SoMa. Gay culture South of Market was built on quivering fill. In 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed the *Drummer* office, and, in effect, the *Drummer* business whose *coup de grace* came from the Internet.

San Francisco, April 25, 1906

Dear Benny,

It's yer old (ha ha) pal Jimmy writin you from General Delivery in Frisco. Where you might of heard back in St Louie we had a little earthquake on my birthday Wednesday last. What a way to turn 19 (ha ha). No birthday cake for me like the one we had two years ago when we had that special birthday party at the St Louie World's Fair before I lit out for Frisco on the train. I ain't forgot what we did. Sorry I ain't writ you much but I bin thinkin about you, &, pal o mine, I wish you were here, but I'm glad yer not. What I seen in the last week could break a man's heart. This whole city it ain't gone, but sorely wounded. Ma Sloat's boardin house where I live is all gone down South of the Slot an so is all the buildins South of the Slot. It's all us workin men down here an pore families because nice San Franciscans never cross South of the Slot in Market Street. Remember I toll you last letter that the cable car slot ran down the center of Market Street from the Ferry

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)**

Buildin west toward Twin Peaks like a line between us an the rich folk we work for. It were terrible after the shakin woke us all up yellin in our longjohns runnin out into the streets at 5:12 in the AM. The Chronicle paper says 60,000 us souls live down South of the Slot, & we was all runnin for it, tryin to get away from the fire that started in a Chinee laundry near Ma Sloat's at Third & Brannan. It just spread & spread through all the broken wood & gas mains shootin flames into the air. I don't want to make you sick, dear Benny, but there was lots of men, some of um I knew, trapped in the wreckage & beggin at first to pull um out till they was beggin anybody to shoot um, & they was shot, because they was about to be burned to death. It was a vision of hell. Nothin none of us could do to keep somethin like 3000 souls alive in our disaster. Somethin like 500 looters was shot on site includin 2 fellas I knew who was just tryin to get their pants out of the wreckage. Gun fire & flames & smoke & explosions. I left Ma Sloat's with nothin. I don't know where I'm gonna live, despite rumors of Trazzini singin at Lotta Crabtree's fountain for us survivors at Geary & Market, as I am now campin next to a tent in Golden Gate Park which you may recall I once told you you'd like since I could see us walkin there, hand in hand through Paradise. So I was wondrin if you wanted to come out here to the ruins (ha ha, but I mean it) because you said you were needin work & there's lots of it. Just so's you know—I been takin my once-a-week salt-water at the Sutro Bath that's as fine as any building at the St Louie Fair. Maybe we could work for room & board for Ma Sloat. She says she's rebuildin over on Folsom Street upstairs over where her brother Hallam has a piece of property for a new saloon because he believes in the future of Frisco even South of the Slot. She says he believes in the future of thirst, & he be namin the little street next his after their father the older Hallam. If you have work there in St Louie then maybe you could send your old secret chum a couple bucks to help out, but, dear Benny, if I have to start over, & I do have prospects, I'd a damn sight rather start over with you by my side here in Frisco cause you never know what's gonna happen next, but this survivor can tell it's gonna happen here, & it would be good for us

because our kind has to know how to take care of ourselves if you get what I mean. I can't meet you in St. Louie, Louie, but I can meet you at the Golden Gate. & you might want to see Tertrazzini as much as me (ha ha). Down on Folsom Street I found some French postcards like you never seen. I love this place, but not as much as you know who. Put that in your pipe, dear Benny, & smoke it. Two bucks would be fine. Your face an other assorted parts would be better cause I'd like to show you my South of the Slot.

Your devoted pal,  
Jimmy

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