

Tigerlily Pictures Presents  
 A Film By Jennifer M. Kroot  
 In Association With Dodgeville Films  
 TRT: 1 hr 31 minutes  
 Country of Production: USA, 2017  
 HD/16:9/ Dolby 5.1

SALES	PUBLICITY	FILM FESTIVAL BOOKINGS
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### **LOGLINE**

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN celebrates one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels inspired millions to re-claim their lives.

### **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN examines the life and work of one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels have inspired millions to claim their own truth. Jennifer Kroot's feature documentary about the creator of "Tales of the City" moves nimbly between the playful and poignant and laugh-out-loud funny.

### **LONG SYNOPSIS**

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN examines the life and work of one of the world's most beloved storytellers, following his evolution from a conservative son of the Old South into a gay rights pioneer whose novels have inspired millions to claim their own truth. Jennifer Kroot's documentary about the creator of TALES OF THE CITY moves nimbly between playful and poignant and laugh-out-loud funny. With help from his friends (including Neil Gaiman, Laura Linney, Olympia Dukakis, Sir Ian McKellen and Amy Tan) Maupin offers a disarmingly frank look at the journey that took him from the jungles of Vietnam to the bathhouses of 70's San Francisco to the front line of the American culture war.

## **STORY SUMMARY**

*The Untold Tale of Armistead Maupin* celebrates the prolific writing career of a beloved literary figure. Author Armistead Maupin is best known for his *Tales of the City* novels that began as a newspaper column for The San Francisco Chronicle in 1976. However Armistead's own "tales" are stranger than fiction, following the evolution of a conservative son of the Old South into a beloved activist for LGBTQ rights. From the Vietnam War, to the Nixon White House, to the bathhouses of San Francisco, Armistead recounts his extraordinary journey from a close-minded individual to an essential, open-hearted progressive, whose voice has inspired millions of readers.



*Tales of the City* became wildly popular for its' portrayal of gay and straight characters living together in a mythic apartment house run by a pot smoking, transgender landlady. The novels set a precedent for the inclusion of queer people in mainstream American literature. Today, when same-sex relationships are a common part of pop culture, it is difficult to remember the ways that *Tales* shattered barriers, presenting queer characters as folks who experience the same foibles, follies and desire for love that lie at the heart of the human condition everywhere.

Armistead was born in Washington D.C. in 1944, but grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina. His father was a prominent attorney of aristocratic Southern stock. Armistead remembers, " I was spoon-fed the family tradition of ancestor worship. I fell in love with a highly romanticized view of history. I completely bought the whole Civil War mythology and the kind of phoney antebellum romance that was being peddled in *Gone with the Wind*."

In his youth, Armistead deeply admired a family friend, future U.S. Senator Jesse Helms, and regarded him as a "political mentor and hero." In 1967, Helms was a conservative journalist at WRAL-TV, and hired Armistead to work for him. Armistead wrote critiques of civil rights actions. Ironically, years later, when the miniseries of *Tale of the City* was produced for PBS, it was Jesse Helms's campaign against homosexuality on public television that led to the show's cancellation.

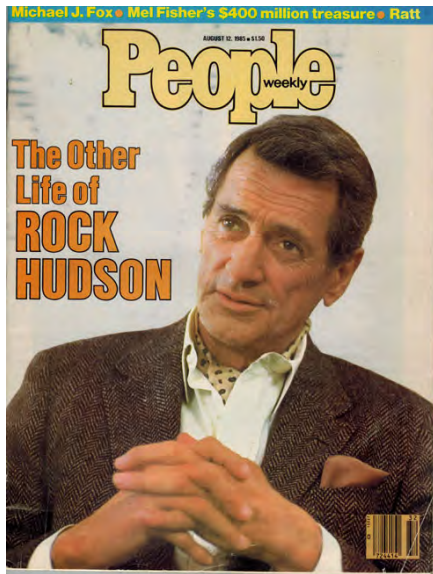
During the Vietnam War, Armistead enlisted as a US Naval Officer. After his final tour, he returned to Vietnam to participate in a program created by President Nixon for ex-GIs to build homes for disabled Vietnamese veterans. He says, "I jumped at the chance to participate when I found out the program was a right wing propaganda offensive to prove that some American GIs supported Nixon's efforts. I regarded the venture as a patriotic duty as a counter offense against John Kerry and Vietnam veterans against the war." Armistead met President Nixon in the Oval Office. Even after Armistead came out, he kept a photograph of himself shaking Nixon's hand on his wall. He remembers, "the men that I brought home reacted as if they'd walked into Jeffrey Dahmer's lair when they saw the picture."



When Armistead came out, he was just under thirty years old and living in San Francisco. He says that "being in this supportive environment made my own tolerance expand. Ultimately, my heart opened." After decades lying to himself and others, it became key to Maupin to live with honesty and integrity. He believes, "the world changes in direct proportion to the number of people willing to be honest about their lives."



Once *Tales of the City* took off as a newspaper column, Armistead gained instant notoriety as a celebrity in the Bay Area. When he decided to tell his parents that he was gay, he did it through his series. Armistead knew that his parents were subscribing to *The Chronicle*, and so he wrote an episode in which one of his main characters (Michael Tolliver) wrote a letter coming out to his mother. The legendary episode is titled *Letter to Mama*. Armistead feels that *Letter to Mama* is the most important thing he's ever written. He says, "Hundreds of gay readers of the *Chronicle* must have felt equally comfortable with such indirect communication because they chose to cut out the episode and mail it to the unsuspecting folks back home with a "me too" as a postscript."



In the late 1970's, Armistead met the iconic leading man, Rock Hudson. They became friends and casual lovers. Armistead remembers how intimidated he was by Rock, "the first time we were together, I couldn't 'perform'. Rock said, 'I'm just like any other guy.' And I said, 'yeah right, and I'm Doris Day.'" Ultimately, Armistead ended the friendship, disapproving of the lengths that Hudson went to maintain his closeted life. When it became public that Rock Hudson had AIDS, a journalist asked Maupin if Rock was gay. Maupin responded, "of course he's gay, and what a terrible tragedy it is that this nice man who played this horrible game all his life was finally revealed through a deadly illness." This was one of the first acts of "outing"

(before the action was even a verb). Armistead was widely vilified in the gay press for what was seen as "a betrayal of the home team."

Armistead has been accused of "outing" other homosexual celebrities, including Lily Tomlin. Armistead defends his position, stating, "It's not your responsibility to be discreet for the sake of people who are still ashamed of their own nature. What earthly good is your discretion when teenagers are still being murdered for the crime of effeminacy?"

Armistead explains that even for him, "I have never really stopped coming out of the closet. I've done it on airplanes with total strangers, because even the kindest people still make the presumption of heterosexuality. I can handle that, but I want to scream when some jokey talk show host asks a little boy if he has found a girlfriend yet. Children are constantly made aware of what is expected them, and that's agony for kids who are trans or queer."

At 72, Armistead's avuncular, southern charm and warm personality appear to be almost in opposition to his headstrong tactics. He warns people not to be complacent because of the recent breakthroughs in marriage equality. "I'm not done with this fight just because I have a ring on my finger. When it comes to bigotry, hearts have always taken longer to change than laws. There are still children everywhere being tormented and driven to suicide, still people being beaten by police or thrown off a roof in the name of one lousy god or another. Here in America there are preachers and politicians who pander *more than they ever* have to the notion that LGBT people are somehow less than human. They do it in name of "religious liberty," completing the big lie that the persecutors are the ones being persecuted. That scares the shit of me."

## **DIRECTOR'S Q&A**

### ***How did this film come about? How did the idea originate? What inspired you?***

For a long time, I've been a fan of Armistead's writing. I was first exposed to "Tales of the City" through the 1994 PBS miniseries, and shortly afterwards, I voraciously read all of the "Tales" books, immediately falling in love with them. I was young, living in San Francisco with gay and straight friends, and I completely related to the stories.

I grew up just north of San Francisco in Marin County. All throughout my childhood and adolescence, I recall my parents and other adults talking about the series when it was in the San Francisco Chronicle, where it was published on and off for over a decade. My parents and their friends complained while waiting for the series to return, discussing the cliffhangers and contemplating what would happen to their beloved characters.

Today it's hard to believe that such a progressive, fictional, daily column, with all variations of LGBTQ people, could be included in any major newspaper.

As Armistead is San Francisco's chronicler and citywide icon, I've had many exciting Armistead sightings over the years, at grocery stores and restaurants in various neighborhoods throughout the city. And with these multiple encounters, my husband mentioned that he thought it was odd that no one had made a documentary about Armistead. I quickly realized that he was right, and more importantly, that Armistead was the perfect subject for me. I've always been drawn to icons who have complicated pasts, and after reading a little about his background and learning that Armistead had been so vehemently conservative as a young man (his first writing job was from Jesse Helms!), I became obsessed with connecting the dots from the young southern Republican to the outspoken, openly gay, warm hearted, activist writer. As with my previous documentary subjects, my obsession with Armistead's compelling story drove me to make a documentary about his life. So many elements from his personal history were powerful and eerily relevant, and I strongly felt that all of them needed to be woven together and shared with a larger audience.

I asked for an introduction to Armistead from a friend who was acquainted with him. I had recently finished my previous film, "To Be Takei," and I was still pretty exhausted, not sure that I wanted to jump into another documentary now, or ever. I was truly hoping that I wouldn't like Armistead, but when we met, I was totally charmed. At our first meeting, I remember being totally taken in by his tales of meeting Richard Nixon and befriending Rock Hudson! Armistead is someone that seems to have always been

at the right place at the right time, both in his conservative life and in his liberal San Francisco one. It occurred to me that in “fictionally” documenting San Francisco in 1970’s, he had captured the time and place of my childhood. I also loved the idea of a film about someone’s personal transformation, masked in glorious, 1970’s San Francisco.

***How long did it take to make the film? From concept to finish.***

This film took almost exactly two years to make from concept to finish. That’s pretty fast! My other two documentary films both took over three years to make.

***Why did you make this film?***

I made this film to celebrate one of my very favorite writers. His “Tales” stories are very personal to me since I grew up in the Bay Area during the era when these stories are told. I also love the idea that Armistead had such a spectacular personal transformation in his life from closeted gay conservative to outspoken, openhearted progressive. As a San Francisco enthusiast, I was thrilled with the thought of using archival footage of San Francisco interwoven with contemporary footage to portray the story.

***Did the film change from your original idea for the film as you were filming or in post?***

All of the themes that I originally envisioned are in the finished film, although the importance of those themes shifted. We began the film during the Obama administration, but production led us into the entire 2016 presidential campaign, including the outcome. It became obvious to us that the issues Armistead grappled with regarding his family were extremely relevant.

When I began making this film in 2015, I was feeling very fed up with the changes in San Francisco, the luxury condos on every corner, Google buses, and the less artistic newer residents and techies. Many of my friends have moved out of the city because housing prices have escalated from the tech boom and rampant Airbnb rentals.

Within the documentary, there’s a lot of archival footage of real people in the 1970’s, and it’s very different than the footage we shot of present day San Franciscans. People used to dress creatively, roller skate, play music in the streets. When we were filming it was difficult to find anyone without a device in their hands. It’s a very different time.

I thought the cinematic look of 1970's San Francisco would be a way of documenting how superior it was then compared to now. Instead, I re-discovered my city, falling back in love with San Francisco's present. Armistead's attitude about the huge change is that he's so happy to be alive after living through the AIDS crisis and losing so many friends. Yes it's changed, but he refuses to complain, and there are many things left to still enjoy, including its beauty and its progressive population. After the election, it became even clearer that San Francisco is still a place for liberals, artists and weirdoes. I now feel incredibly grateful to live in a city with people who share my political, social and cultural values. San Francisco has never looked so beautiful to me.

***What were the challenges in making this film?***

It's very challenging to get any funding before having something to show potential financiers. Even with Armistead's involvement, along with many of his colleagues (Sir Ian McKellen, Luran Linney, and Olympia Dukakis), it took a long time to get grants and donors on board.

It's always challenging to build a structure for the film. The story interweaves scenes of vastly different tones and time periods. I also like to play with timeline, not sticking to the chronological events in documentary portraits.

***What were the successes that you had in making this film?***

We were able to interview everyone on our list. Armistead is close friends with some amazing people like, Sir Ian McKellen, Laura Linney, Olympia Dukakis, Amy Tan, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Groff, among many others. Because they are so fond of Armistead, they were all very flexible and did interviews for the film right at the beginning of shooting.

We received a few grants to make the film, the Rogovy Foundation, the Fleishhacker Foundation and the Frameline Completion Fund.



***What do you want audiences to take away from this film? Talk about the importance of Armistead now in the climate we are in.***

I hope audiences will connect with Armistead's vision of having a "logical family," people who support you for being your honest self. I also hope people will have an appreciation of Armistead's ingenuity as a writer.

I secretly hope that people will be mesmerized by the footage of my city, San Francisco.

Armistead coined the term "logical family" rather than biological family. In his writing, Armistead explored his own experience having little in common with his conservative southern family and creating a new logical family of the like-minded people he met in San Francisco. This idea is especially important to LGBT people since there is a history of familial rejection. In a time of extreme political divisiveness, the themes that Armistead wrote about seem to resonate even more, where it's important to be surrounded by people who accept you. In addition to finding one's own logical family, it's equally important to find your authentic self. That message comes through in all of Armistead's writing.

Armistead is casually inclusive in his writing without coming off as overly didactic. His characters range from a variety of LGBT characters to straight, dwarf women in mixed race relationships. However, his writing is so natural that you don't think about political correctness. In fact, Armistead is often not politically correct. He writes characters from the heart. This inclusion is important at this time when our leaders are talking about registering groups of people and taking civil liberties away from others. In a climate where our leaders are espousing hate, it feels really comforting to be sharing a heartfelt vision of diverse inclusivity.

***Talk about something with the filming process – editing, score, cinematography. What did you want to communicate visually?***

Visually we wanted to communicate a fluidity of time. We move back and forth between footage of young Armistead and 1970's San Francisco to present day footage. There is a stream of consciousness and experimental quality to the editing structure, but the story is quite accessible and emotionally grounded. My editor and I decided that the film should be broken up into chapters with animated title pages throughout. This adds a playful layer to the dense variety of footage. Michael Hearst composed the score, which unites the many moods of the film.

***Anything else you want to add about the making of the film and it's importance?***

I have been thinking of this film as the finale in a trilogy of my films about older, gay artists. People frequently ask me why I keep making films about old gay guys. It's not something that I purposely set out to do, and of course, not all old, gay guys are the same. I really admire these specific older, gay artists who felt compelled to create some type of artwork, but they all had to grapple with their sexuality in one way or another, because they came of age in a homophobic time. Sexuality is invisible, but when you make art, you are usually trying to express yourself, and I have an appreciation for these men being so compelled to communicate who they were through their artistic craft, and figuring out how to do that in eras that were not necessarily welcoming to gay people.

Another thing that these men have in common is that, even in their 70's, they are all still compelled to make art. It's inspiring to me to witness older people engaged in the creative process. All of these men were fairly young during the AIDS crisis, and lost a lot of their friends and peers. That could be one of the reasons that they all are so prolific. They don't take time for granted. I've been lucky to get to know these men and learn from them. They are all artists that I deeply admire, and as I put these films together, I feel like I'm getting a chance to take a master class in subjects that I'm documenting. I am grateful to create a vision of what fascinates me about these artists so that I can share their stories with people who may have overlooked them. It's exciting to connect the dots of interesting peoples' lives, especially when the dots have an unusual order. I always hear people saying that everyone has a story. I don't exactly think that's true. Everyone may have a story, but there are some people whose stories are extremely unique.

***Armistead Maupin Professional Timeline***

1974: Comes out of the closet and publishes first "Tales of the City" stories in Marin County's Pacific Sun newspaper. The series is originally called "The Serial."

1976: San Francisco Chronicle picks up "Tales of the City," where it will run in serialized fashion through 1984.

1978: Harper & Row publishes "Tales of the City" novel.

1980: "More Tales of the City" published.

1982: "Further Tales of the City" published.

1984: "Babycakes," the fourth "Tales" novel, addresses the impact of AIDS on the San Francisco community. It includes the first fictional depiction of a character to die of AIDS.

1992: HarperCollins publishes "Maybe the Moon," Armistead's first non-Tales novel.

1994: "Tales of the City" mini-series premieres on PBS, achieving record ratings and a Peabody Award. Conservatives, including Senator Jesse Helms, protest the series. PBS, fearing a cut in government funding, refuses to produce a sequel series.

1998: "More Tales of the City" mini-series premieres on Showtime.

2000: Harper Collins publishes "The Night Listener," which first appears as an audio novel on Salon.com.

2001: "Further Tales of the City" mini-series premieres on Showtime.

2006: Feature film adaptation of "The Night Listener," scripted by Maupin, premieres at the Sundance film festival and released by Miramax.

2007: After an 18 year hiatus, publishes a new Tales of the City novel, "Michael Tolliver Lives."

2010: Publishes "Mary Ann in Autumn."

2014: Publishes "The Days of Anna Madrigal," the final Tales of the City novel.

### **CREW BIOS**

**Director Jennifer M. Kroot**, is a seasoned documentary filmmaker. Her most recent feature length documentary, *To Be Takei*, a portrait of actor/activist George Takei (Star Trek), premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically by Starz Digital in August 2014 to critical acclaim. Her feature documentary *It Came From Kuchar*, following cult filmmaking duo George and Mike Kuchar, premiered at the 2009 South by Southwest Film Festival.

Kroot brings a background in underground filmmaking to her documentaries, and uses that sensibility to create surprises within her stories. Her tales incorporate shifts in pace

and tone that allow a fluid and engaging structure. Kroot focuses on the humanity of her subjects, keeping their stories accessible and unpretentious.

She has received grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Frameline, the Pacific Pioneer Fund, California Civil Liberties Public Education Program and the Fleishhacker Foundation. Kroot is a Bay Area native and studied film at The San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI), where she taught film. She has been a guest lecturer at Stanford and Denver University.

**Editor Bill Weber** is a San Francisco based documentary editor. He directed and edited the documentary feature *THE COCKETTES* which premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and 2002 Berlinale. Bill co-directed and edited the documentary feature *WE WERE HERE*, which played at the 2011 Sundance and Berlinale festivals, and *TO BE TAKEI*, which premiered at Sundance in 2014. As an editor, Bill's work includes *A REVOLUTION IN FOUR SEASONS*, 2016 HotDocs, *FEELINGS ARE FACTS: THE LIFE OF YVONNE RAINER*, 2015 Berlinale, *THE GALAPAGOS AFFAIR*, 2013 Telluride Film Festival and 2014 Berlinale, and the Oscar nominated documentary short film, *THE FINAL INCH*. He also edited the award winning documentaries *LAST LETTERS HOME* and *THE ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT*.

**Producers Gerry Kim and Mayuran Tiruchelvam** formed Dodgeville Films to produce humanistic narrative and documentary films. They are Sundance Institute Creative Producing fellows and Film Independent Fellows. Their most recent feature film, *MY FIRST KISS AND THE PEOPLE INVOLVED* premiered at the 2016 LA Film Festival. They also produced the romantic drama *ACROSS THE SEA*, winner of the audience award at the 2015 Slamdance Film Festival, and documentaries *TO BE TAKEI*, which premiered at Sundance in 2014, and *FAREWELL FERRIS WHEEL*, 2016 AFI Docs.

Gerry produced the documentary *THE HOUSE OF SUH*, which premiered at the 2010 Hot Docs, and aired on MSNBC in 2011. Mayuran's screenwriting and producing debut, *THE GIRL IS IN TROUBLE* was Executive Produced by Spike Lee and released by eOne in 2015. He co-produced *THE MEND*, 2014 SXSW.

Gerry and Mayuran received MFA's from Columbia University's Graduate Film Program, where Mayuran is an adjunct faculty member. Their work has been supported by the Princess Grace Foundation, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Producers Guild of America, and the Sundance Institute.

**CREDITS**

Tigerlily Pictures Presents  
A Film By Jennifer M. Kroot  
In Association With Dodgeville Films

**Written and Directed by**

Jennifer M. Kroot

**Edited and Co-Directed by**

Bill Weber

**Produced by**

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Jennifer M. Kroot  
Mayuran Tiruchelvam

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**Composer**

Michael Hearst

**Sound Edit & Mix**

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**Associate Producers**

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Chris Million

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Matt May

**Provincetown Cinematographer**

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Chris White  
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Gerry Kim

**Archival Research**

Rosalia Valenica -Tow

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**Audio Post Facility**

Skywalker Sound

**Digital Transfers**

Movette

**Transcription**

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Capitol Records  
CBS Television  
Duke University Archive  
Harper Collins  
KRON4  
Latipac  
Letters Live  
Miramax  
National Enquirer  
Newsweek  
Pacific Sun  
PBS  
HBO  
People Magazine  
Portland's Gay Men Chorus  
Time Magazine  
Universal Pictures  
Universal Television  
Warner Brothers  
Working Title Films  
WRAL  
Village Voice

### **MUSIC**

Bell Note Lullaby  
Written by Harold Geller  
Atmosphere Music Ltd PRS  
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

Dream Sequence  
Written by Piero Piccioni  
Universal Music Publishing Ricordi srl [SIAE]  
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

Planet 54  
Written by Dave Ruffly [PRS], Gary Tibbs [ASCAP], Peter Glenister [PRS]  
Soundcast Music SESAC  
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

"Tres Pasajeros"  
Written by Chica Libre  
Performed by Chica Libre  
Courtesy of Marc Hollander, Pierre Mossiat

"San Francisco (You've Got Me)"  
Performed by Village People  
Courtesy of The Island Def Jam Music Group under license from Universal Music  
Enterprises and Scorpio Music, S.A.

**Additional Musicians**

Ben Holmes - trumpet  
Beth Meyers - viola  
Sam Sadigursky - clarinet and flute

**Daddy Hunt Models**

Michael Daly  
Gus D'Angelo  
Jim Foster  
Mark Garrett  
Lewis Gillian  
Dino Haightdean  
Jeff Kroot  
Mike Kuchar  
Mayuran Tiruchelvam  
Eric Smith  
Bill Weber  
Will Zang

**Interviews (in alphabetical order)**

Kate Bornstein  
Charles Busch  
Margaret Cho  
Olympia Dukakis  
Neil Gaiman  
Jewelle Gomez

Jonathan Groff  
Peggy Knickerbocker  
Laura Linney  
Selene Luna  
Armistead Maupin  
Jane Maupin Yates  
Sir Ian McKellen  
Barbara Newhall  
Bob Olynger  
Amanda Palmer with Ash Gaiman  
Alan Poul  
Amy Tan  
Richard Thieriot  
Christopher Turner

**Thanks**

Don Bachardy  
Salvatore Botti  
Marcus Chan  
Alex Cherian  
Christine DiCrocco  
The Crown and Anchor  
Alan Cumming  
Dog Eared Books  
Joseph Ferrucci  
Rachel Gordon  
Dena Hammerstein  
Todd Hargis  
Gladys Helzberg  
Yvonne Israel-O'Hare  
Rachel Klyce  
James Lecesne  
Markmgarrett.com  
Michael Michaud  
Pat Montandon  
Ellen Moore  
Raymond L. Mulliner  
Scott Norman  
Kevin O'Connell

Dave O'Hare  
Alvin Orloff  
Abigail Reider  
David Sarno  
Adrian Smith  
Tom Spitz  
Angie Thieriot  
Trent Thornley  
Trip Weil

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Gus D'Angelo  
Tina S. Kroot  
Jeff Kroot  
Lewis Gillian  
Aaron Starr  
Florence Pak  
Eric G. Smith  
Junia Tiruchelvam  
Vasudevan Tiruchelvam  
Philo  
Gus  
Koko  
Pele

In Loving Memory of Gail "Anni Abbi" D'Angelo

**Dedicated to the spirits of San Francisco including...**

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Randy David  
Michael Cooper  
Art Holman  
Steve Beery  
Richard Ideamon