

HE'S NOT
TO BLAME

Silver: Shanahan coached
boldly against an elite foe.

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ISRAEL RESCUES
TWO HOSTAGES

Forces storm heavily guarded apartments
in Gaza Strip as airstrikes kill dozens.

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TALE OF THE
'AFRONAUTS'

Film salutes overlooked
Black U.S. space travelers.

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Tim Hornbuckle, left, and Antony Lopez talk as they sit in a booth at Chicago Cafe in Woodland, northwest of Sacramento, which is decorated with gifts from customers, including a taxidermied peacock.

Photos by Lea Suzuki/The Chronicle

Chinese restaurant might be oldest in U.S.

UC Davis researchers trying to confirm 1903 opening date

By Mario Cortez

Stepping inside the unassuming Chicago Cafe in Woodland, near Sacramento in Yolo County, is like a trip through time. Owners Paul and Nancy Fong still cook each order for their regulars who sit on stools at the diner counter, waiting on plates of fried prawns and pork fried rice. Old pictures and newspaper clippings hang on the wall, covered in the unmistakable patina of an old family restaurant.

But Chicago Cafe isn't just old. Using documents like these and extensive archival research, a team at UC Davis recently confirmed that Chicago Cafe is the oldest Chinese restaurant in California. The restaurant at 411 Main St. is documented to have begun serving customers in 1910, though its origins could stretch back to 1903, as printed on menus. If true, that would make it the oldest continuously operating Chinese restaurant in the United States as well.

UC Davis School of Law Professor Gabriel "Jack" Chin is leading the research into Chicago Cafe, part of a larger project involving students of law, comparative literature



Owner Paul Fong garnishes an order of chow mein. Members of the Fong family have operated the restaurant since its opening.

and history examining discriminatory laws against Asian people in California. Tracing the history of the cafe or other Asian-owned businesses is difficult because, for example, turn-of-the-century directories excluded Chinese-owned businesses.

Chin began to take an interest in finding the oldest Chinese restau-

rants in the country when traveling to conferences and on trips. He has visited the Pekin Noodle Parlor in Butte, Mont., founded in 1909 (though some records have it in 1911) and often cited as the oldest continuously operating Chinese restaurant in the country. "It is a fantastic facility and a fantastic restaurant,"

Restaurant continues on A7

"People always tell us this is the real Chinese food they've always known. Our stuff is original to so many people."

Andy Fong, whose great-grandfather was the first in his family to work at the restaurant

Claims, judges' records at odds

Group argues dangerous
defendants were freed, but
case details more nuanced

By Bob Egelko

A group called Stop Crime Action says San Francisco Superior Court Judges Michael Begert and Patrick Thompson are soft on crime. The group says both judges have freed dangerous defendants while they were awaiting trial — but records of their cases appear to tell a somewhat different story.

The judges' records are under scrutiny because both face election challenges in March. Most Superior Court judges are automatically elected to new six-year terms because they have no challengers, which was the case with Begert in 2018.

But while San Francisco's rate of violent crime has been steadily declining, property crime rates, drug use and public fears are high, and their potency as a political issue was displayed in the 2022 recall of left-leaning District Attorney Chesa Boudin.

Stop Crime Action, founded by anti-crime activist Frank Noto with financial assistance from billionaire William Oberndorf, was active in Boudin's

Judges continues on A8

How tuition for S.F. private schools soared

By Kellie Hwang

The financial burden of a private school education in San Francisco has skyrocketed in recent years, with the cost to send a child to 13 years of elite education tallying \$520,000 from kindergarten through high school.

Historical data on tuition across California shows it has not always been so expensive. For the past several decades, tuition has been increasing at a much greater rate than family income levels.

Average annual tuition has risen nearly 70% in the past 20 years when adjusted for inflation, according to a Chronicle analysis of tuition data for members of the California Association of Independent Schools. And in the past 40 years, it has shot up a staggering 243% — from about \$11,000 in today's money to over \$38,000.

That's a particular concern in the Bay Area where a greater share of families send children to private school than statewide. In San Francisco, nearly one-third of K-12 students are enrolled in a private school versus 10% in California, according to Private School Review, a website that gathers self-reported data from nearly 4,000 private

Tuition continues on A8

Striking new building a model for city's urban landscape

Taking stock of San Francisco's commercial core these days is a multilayered experience. There's the hollowed-out aftermath of the pandemic, the angst over what might lie ahead and the fact that construction is still taking place — shaping the future landscape, for better or worse.

Which brings us to the corner of Bryant and Zoe streets, where a modest but striking new office building called 531 Bryant offers a template for how, going forward, fresh additions to the urban landscape can serve to enrich the texture of what's already here. Visually, it enlivens its surroundings while still feel-

JOHN KING
URBAN DESIGN

ing rooted. Better yet, the 531 Bryant newcomer is genuinely engaging where it touches ground, with elements that should attract nearby workers and residents, as well as the tenants upstairs.

And, yes, this holds true even though the 50,000-square-foot building is vacant.

That's what happens when a structure billed as "the NextGen of South Park" debuts at a time of 34% vacancy rates and as tech-related companies continue to shed physical space. A project

conceived when this low-slung district was anointed by planners to be the city's next growth zone, Central SoMa, now joins a part of town riddled with "for lease" signs.

But none of that erodes the underlying quality of the deceptively straightforward structure designed by Handel Architects for Urban Land Development.

The newcomer is five stories along Bryant Street between Third and Fourth streets, with a notch down to four stories along alley-like Zoe Street. Full-floor windows sit deep within a muscular right-angled grid — but where blue-collar survivors to

Building continues on A7



Benjamin Fanjoy/The Chronicle

The new building at 531 Bryant St., left, shows how additions in San Francisco's core can add to what's already there.

