

Under cover: Chains buy indie shops, keep names

Sellers wary of Barnes & Noble’s purchase of Bay Area Books and other deals like it

By J.K. Dineen
STAFF WRITER

Barnes & Noble CEO James Daunt says he bought the nine-store Bay Area Books Inc. for a simple reason: The company had filed for bankruptcy, and he didn’t want to see the bookstores close. “It’s a mystery that, throughout my professional life, many, many wonderful bookstores have gone out of business,” Daunt said.

“Since I am in a position to do something about it, I do.” While Daunt’s \$3.2 million purchase of the West Coast’s oldest independent bookstore chain may have preserved stores from shuttering, the deal has roiled the tight-knit world of independent Bay Area booksellers, a group of bookstores that is among the strongest and most influential in the country. With one fell swoop, Barnes &

Noble went from having no presence in San Francisco — the last store had shuttered in 2010 — to operating stores in the Marina, Laurel Village and Civic Center in addition to San Francisco International Airport, as well as outlets in San Leandro, Alameda, Campbell and elsewhere. While the 600-store Barnes & Noble chain is also expanding rapidly — it opened 57 stores in 2024 and is on pace to open 60 this year — critics take issue with the fact that the retailer is buying up independent stores and continuing *Books continues on A8*



Yalonda M. James/S.F. Chronicle

The owners of Noe Valley Books and other San Francisco stores fear large chains will drive them out of business by purchasing independent shops and keeping their old names.



DOGS DRESS UP FOR HOWL-O-WEEN



PHOTOS BY BRONTÉ WITTPENN/S.F. CHRONICLE

ABOVE: Dorian, dressed as a teddy bear, sits for a photo on Sunday during the annual Howl-O-Ween event and costume contest at the Bark at Spark food truck park in San Francisco’s Mission Bay. LEFT: Brixton waits for the festivities to start. About 90 dogs were registered by their owners for the costume contest and a “paw-rade.” *See story on page A3.*

Protests add to East Bay island’s dramatic history

By Peter Hartlaub
CULTURE CRITIC

A man-made island in the Oakland Estuary has been at the center of recent Bay Area news. Since the Chronicle reported Wednesday that the Trump administration was sending more than 100 federal agents to Coast Guard Island, the entrance to the little-known isle between Oakland and Alameda has become the epicenter of protests over the president’s planned, then called-off, immigration enforcement surge and the site of confrontations between demonstrators and federal agents and Coast Guard security personnel. For some in the Bay Area, it’s likely the first they’ve heard of the 67-acre island that’s connected to Oakland but historically part of the city of Alameda. But the base has a long and dramatic history dating back a century, including busting Prohibition rumrunners, training tens of thousands of Coast Guard recruits and holding immigrants after another controversial crackdown. *Island continues on A8*

Homes in Berkeley try newer method to fix rat problem

By Lucy Hodgman
STAFF WRITER

Lynne-Rachel Altman had tried everything — poison, snap traps and a small army of house cats — but the rats in her South Berkeley home were unfazed. Generations of rodents had been scrabbling around Altman’s attic since she was a child. Over the summer, she switched to a different tactic: birth control. It’s a newer method of rat management, but one that’s growing in popularity as a humane alternative to the messy business of traditional trapping. Altman’s interest in the project wasn’t motivated by any love of rats — she hates them. But her cats, Earhart and Walker, were getting too old to hunt, and she didn’t like pulling rat carcasses out of traps. Altman figured the contraceptive method wouldn’t work if hers was the only house on the *Rats continues on A9*

8-year-old follows in brother’s footsteps

Same El Capitan ascent 2 years ago drew controversy

By Gregory Thomas
STAFF WRITER

An 8-year-old boy and his father reached the top of El Capitan late Friday night, having ascended the 3,000-foot cliff in a weeklong group climbing trip. About an hour before the finish, 150 feet below the summit ledge, the boy, Sylvan Lightyear Evermore, was preparing to ascend the last of about 30 pitches up the famed rock formation in Yosemite National Park. His father, Joe Evermore, sounded high-spirited but fatigued.

“We need to finish,” Evermore said on a call with the Chronicle. “We planned for four days. We’re out of everything — food, water, everything.” Evermore had earlier described the rhythm of their days on El Cap’s classic Free-rider route: He and Sylvan would hang out on a portaledge while tied into bolted anchors, playing checkers and eating candy, while two climber friends scaled the pitches above and prepared fixed ropes for the father and son to “jug up” using handheld ascender devices — a style known as a rope ascent. It’s different from traditional rock climbing, but it is tiring work. The group, accompanied by *Climber continues on A9*



Courtesy of Joe Evermore

Sylvan Lightyear Evermore, 8, from Colorado, moves up El Capitan in Yosemite National Park by rope during a weeklong group climbing trip. He reached the top on Friday.