



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Nighttime cabbies are blessed, too

THE annual blessing of the taxicabs and their drivers by Fathers Floyd Lotito and Jorge Hernandez of St. Boniface Church took place at night for the first time since the rite started in 1999. About 125 cabbies were blessed Aug. 29. Then, the next noon, about that many more received the blessing. Ulisses Correa was the driver of this Yellow Cab from which Father Lotito is seen performing the customary ritual. Not only the drivers and their cabs got blessed, but many drivers also held up a medal, rosary, Bible or picture of a loved one for the priest to say his prayer over. The drivers at each ritual received a free box lunch from the Taxi Association. They had their choice of beef or turkey sandwich. ■

—TOM CARTER

Web of deceit: TL organizer victim of cyber-stalking

Yahoo no help in halting defamatory postings on message boards

BY JOHN GOINS

MICHAEL Nulty, president of the Alliance for a Better District 6, says he's been the target of defamatory attacks on Yahoo message boards and that Yahoo has done little to help him. In fact, since last year, Yahoo has done a lot to hurt Nulty's online organizing, among the neighborhood's pioneering netroots efforts.

Nulty believes Rick Hauptman, former interim president of Central City Democrats, which Nulty helped create last year, is impersonating him on the Internet, using the moniker Michaeln94109. Hauptman was kicked out of the group in April.

"He's already alienated me with the Central City Democrats," Nulty, club treasurer, said. "He's belittled me and said things like 'you're crazy,'" said Nulty, an award-winning mental health advocate.

Nulty said that he discovered the Yahoo ID Michaeln94109 on several message boards that he subscribes to, checked the computer profile and found the profile update with his name, Michael Nulty, on it.

The message boards: Shotwell_eshout, NorthMissionNeighbors, starting-nonprofit, sfplanning, SanFranciscoCalifornia, Justice4Bessie and Undemocratic-California have all received postings using Nulty's name, said Nulty, winner of the Mental Health Association's Champion Award in May and the Mayor's Disability Council Award for Excellence last year.

"The combined subscribers of the above message boards is 1,404," Nulty wrote in an e-mail to The Extra.

He said that this has been going on since April and referred to a particularly offensive message board posted as: "Bipolar (BP) Democratic Club. There needs to be a Democratic Club for all of us. Michael." The moniker Michaeln94109 was listed as the creator of the message board.

"It caused me a lot of grief," said Nulty, also a Central City Extra Editorial Advisory Committee member. Nulty is not the only one who feels harassed by Hauptman. According to a July 26 article in the Bay Area Reporter, Tim Durning, the treasurer of the Harvey Milk Club of which Nulty is a member, has filed a complaint against Hauptman, the club's recorder, for "sending harassing e-mails."

Nulty launched a formal complaint to Yahoo to prevent such incidents from happening again.

Yahoo delivered its stock response to Nulty's complaint: "Yahoo has many users worldwide, and due to the popularity of cer-

tain aliases, similar subscriber IDs are created." It then, more hopefully, said that "impersonation is a serious offense and a violation of the Terms of Service (TOS)." Section Six of Yahoo's TOS states:

"You agree to not use service to: (a) upload, post, email, transmit or otherwise make available any content that is unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, tortious, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable ... (c) impersonate any person or entity..."

Nulty provided the big search engine with the information it required in order to take action.

And then he waited.

But the abuse continues and Yahoo, with its corporate tentacles stretching to China, has been unable or unwilling to stop it.

"As of today, I have not heard from Yahoo about my complaint about impersonation and harassment by profile: Michaeln94109. And the profile and message board created by Michaeln94109 are still posted on the Internet," Nulty said.

A recent Web search by The Extra revealed that Michaeln94109 was still posted on Yahoo under the name Michael Nulty. The BPDemocraticClub was also found using Michaeln94109.

Lawsuits involving Yahoo message boards abound.

According to an Aug. 6 article in E-Commerce Times, L.A. corporate lawyer Stephen Galton "sued Yahoo, charging the portal didn't do enough to help him stop personal attacks against him on its message boards," Keith Regan reported.

"Galton is leaving the suit open for others to join, proposing to establish a class action suit on behalf of California residents who — since 2000 — have been targeted by abusive messages on a Yahoo board and denied information about their attackers," Regan wrote.

Nulty said that Hauptman had tried to subscribe to another of his message boards,

Alexander Tenants Association, as Rick Hauptman, and to Nulty's twin brother, John Nulty's message board under Michaeln94109.

But "I have the ability to instantly remove his posting," Nulty said.

Unfortunately for Nulty, his Yahoo problems in maintaining message boards as a forum for low-income residents and community activists hit a peak last May when the boards he created suddenly and mysteriously disappeared, destroyed by Yahoo. The damage was immense.

"That was 6½ years of work, eight Yahoo groups, 8,000 subscribers," said Nulty.

Foul play?

"We appreciate your report of possible abuse in Yahoo Groups," Yahoo replied to Nulty then. "We have investigated your report and have taken appropriate action as per Terms of Service." But there was no apology, disclosure as to what happened or who might have caused the destruction of his work. And no replacement of the lost data.

"Please know that Yahoo is unable to disclose the action taken on another user's account with a third party. We are not able to make exceptions to this rule," Yahoo wrote.

And after two more such paragraphs, "Have a nice day!" ■

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