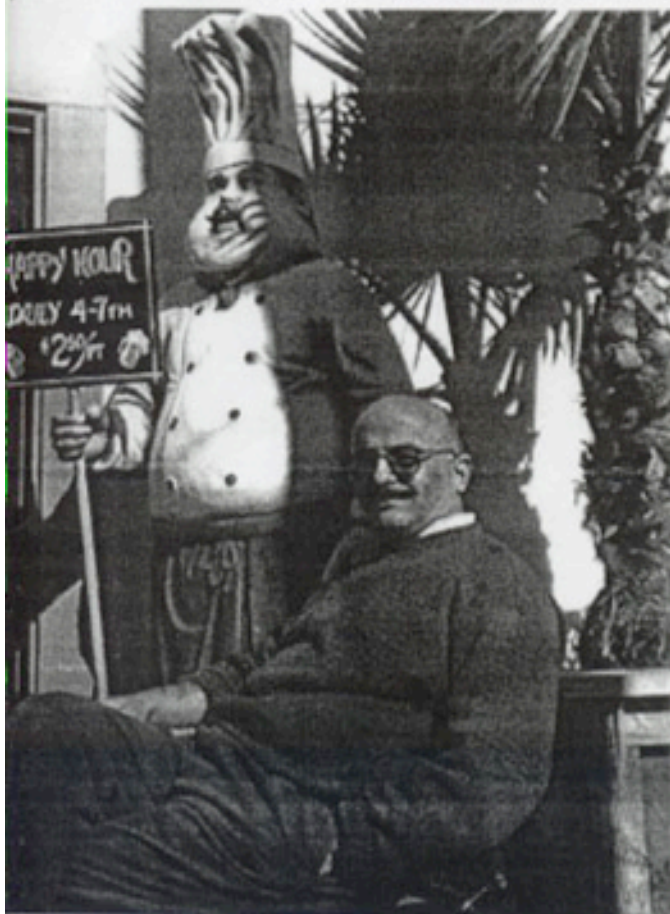


Meet the Merchants: Paul Mogannam

Paul Mogannam has had a large presence in Cole Valley for eight years. He is the owner of *The Postal Chase* on Cole Street and *BurgerMeister* on Carl.

Paul is a businessman who likes new ventures. "I enjoy the excitement of coming up with an idea and seeing it succeed," he explains. He appreciates being part of the neighborhood and having neighborhood contacts.

In 1992, when he was starting the *Creperie* at the present *BurgerMeister* location, Paul bought an old TV from the restaurant's prior owner. It didn't work, so he went across the street to a TV



repair shop. The TV was repaired, but more important, the owner of that store offered it to Paul. He bought it and opened *The Postal Chase*.

Paul works with the idea that the customer comes first. When you go to *The Postal Chase* to copy documents or mail a package, you find—in addition to cheerful service—boxes, packing popcorn and envelopes. You also get free use of marker pens, staplers, paperclips, all the equipment you need to get your package going. There is even a full candy dish (and dog biscuits) to enjoy while you wait.

And Paul goes out of his way to help. Once, when I ran over with a fax that needed to be sent immediately, I found I had left the fax number at home. Paul volunteered to look up the recipient's phone number, called, and asked for the fax number! With an attitude like that, it is no wonder that he has succeeded and opened two

more *Postal Chase* stores, one on Fillmore Street and one on West Portal Avenue.

Paul sees Cole Valley as a unique neighborhood, tucked away and unknown to many outsiders. His *Creperie* was a success with high end food cooked to order. However, Paul felt it was a bit too formal for its small size. The next venture was Mexican, which did not do as well as he thought it should. He wondered whether to stay or sell the business. He decided to stay and try again—this time with a traditional menu of hamburgers, fries, chili and shakes.

Opening *BurgerMeister* in a health-conscious neighborhood was a bit of a risk, Paul admits. However, he did his research and learned that hamburgers were making a comeback. He believed that even in an area where tofu ranks high, good quality old-fashioned comfort food at a fair price would be welcome. He looked around for top quality meat and found it at the Niman Ranch in Bolinas. Now, *BurgerMeister* is doing a good business, attracting young couples with children. The meat is excellent.

Paul is happy in the neighborhood. He likes its diversity. Although he doesn't live here, he started the annual Easter egg hunt along with Lisa Vierra, who has the hair salon across the street. "Merchants and residents don't have many opportunities to interact casually," he laments. "The Easter egg hunt is a chance to get together for fun."

Paul is of Palestinian origin, born in Jerusalem. He has lived here for 35 years. He is married with four children, all boys.

And the statue outside *BurgerMeister*? That's not meant to be Paul, even though with its moustache and cheerful face, it looks a bit like him.

—Marian Halley