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Credo: Movie reviewer Jan Wahl

By **Tiffany Malesheski**
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SAN FRANCISCO – San Francisco’s beloved movie reviewer Jan Wahl tells us about her life’s lessons, the women who have influenced her, and how it’s important to find the positive within unexpected happenings.

What do you consider to be your “golden rule?” “Plant your feet and tell the truth.” Jimmy Cagney said that. And then from Emile Zola: “I’ve come to live out loud.” And the other one is from Auntie Mame, who said, “Life is a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death.” ... Oh, and Harold and Maude. Harold and Maude is one of my favorite movies ever made. It was filmed in San Francisco, by the way, and Ruth Gordon who plays Maude, one of her lines is “Live, live, live! Otherwise, you got nothing to talk about in the locker room.”



Movie reviewer Jan Wahl says that the best lesson she’s ever learned is not to be invested too heavily in what other people think of her.

Mike Koozmin/Special to The Examiner

What is the best lesson you’ve learned and what is the hardest you’ve learned? The best lesson is not to be invested too heavily in what other people think of you. And women, particularly women, need to know that. Women have the tendency to people-please and cookie cutter themselves to the shape of what others want them to be and they need to know to march to their own drummer. The hardest, is what Betty Davis said: “They only shoot at stars.” My industry is becoming very vanilla pudding. The media, because of various reasons ... the homogenization of voices in the media and I stand out. And I’m glad I do, but at the same time I have to remember what Betty Davis said.

Does everything happen for a reason? Or do we control our own destiny? There’s so many things that happen that don’t make any sense. That’s a tough one. Control what you can, and the most important thing is to find the positive in the surprises.

Best part about being in the spotlight? Two years ago I was one of the celebrity marshals at Gay Pride [parade], and I got to ride down “the avenue,” Market Street, and people of all kinds, colors, ages, sizes, types, everybody waving and cheering. And everywhere I go, especially when I have the hat on, I am definitely recognized, it is a pure joy to have people say, “Hey I didn’t agree with you, but you sure made me think.”

What person has influenced the course of your life most — personally or professionally? Two women come to mind. My mother, who is a strong, world-traveling, kick-butt woman, and she’s so bright. To this day, she’s just bright and funny and feisty and always has a cause. She’s always got fire in her belly. Vitality. That’s one of my favorite characteristics of anybody. And another person is Mae West and Bette Midler — I guess there’s a theme going here with strong women.

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