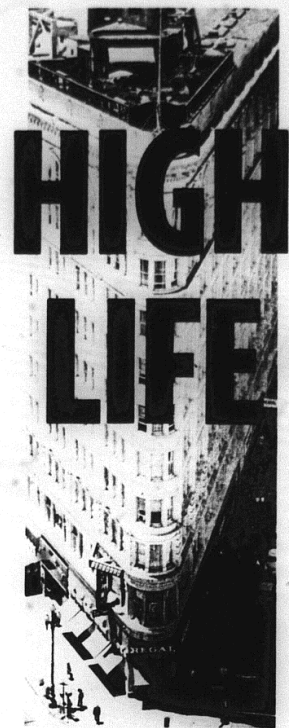




*Phelan penthouse's skinny kitchen opens from foyer, offers rooftop views. Beyond it is the compact bedroom. Limited storage space is augmented by using part of the elevator housing structure outside*



## At O'Farrell And Market

by Phyllis Seidkin

The "shortest commute in town" is down one flight of marble stairs in one of the city's busiest, most centrally located office buildings.

The route is from the penthouse apartment of the Phelan Building—where the late Senator James D. Phelan entertained the famous—to the commercial photography studio of one of its tenants, Frank van Eckhardt.

He and his wife, Bernice, share this unusual roof top dwelling with four cats, one collie dog, five parakeets, two goldfish, one myna bird and one large land turtle. (Legend has it that a boa constrictor formerly lived there; it reportedly disappeared down a skylight shortly before its tenant-owner removed to other quarters.)

"The building people offered it to me as a studio about nine years ago," explains genial

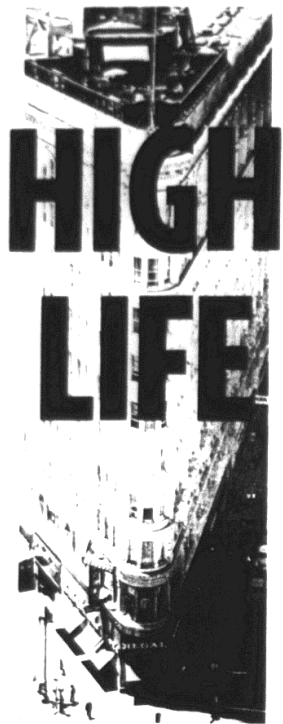
*continued*



*Penthouse garden has 1,200 square feet, hundreds of trees, shrubs and flowers in containers, a fountain, a large, aloof land turtle. Mrs. van Eckhardt is chief gardener, battles the same pests that harass plant lovers at lower altitudes*



*Skylight brightens entry hall, which leads at left to tiny study, and bathroom beyond. Indoor gardening even includes built-in planter in glass-topped, wrought iron dining table. The van Eckhardts picked wall color, discovered it matched long-hidden ceiling fresco revealed in penthouse rejuvenation just before the pair moved in*



# HIGH LIFE

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Octagon-shaped living room has 200 window panes in its floor to ceiling glass walls, has gilded pillars at garden doorway. Mrs. van Eckhardt finished bookcases that act as room divider



Plant-flanked staircase entices many curious visitors up to penthouse. Some want to eat lunch on the roof, others want to rubberneck at the view



Would-be suicide from Humboldt Bank Building (rear) was once thwarted with van Eckhardts' aid. From their vantage point, they gave police running report

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GORMAN

## HIGH LIFE: Will They Raze the Roof?

continued

"Van" "Instead, my wife and I decided to live in it."

Their package rent includes his two room studio just below. A telephone inter-com system connects studio to home. Before, says Mrs. van Eckhardt, "I used to yell at him down the light well."

What's it like living in this unlikely aerie? It's surprisingly free of street noises, and very handy to marketing and to shopping (although Mrs. van Eckhardt finds that "I don't go downtown nearly as much as I used to").

Any problems? Parking is one; often the family car is left several miles distant. Another concern is the ever-present possibility of their home being eliminated by Phelan Building expansion.

The van Eckhardts certainly don't share the view of a former building engineer who, they say, once turned down an offer to rent the penthouse for \$35 a month. He said it was too close to his work.