

JOSEPH SOLDIVELA
Dentist, poet, songwriter

Joyful Joseph "Doctor Joe" Soldivela was a poet, songwriter and singer who gladly shared his gifts, thereby becoming the life, if not the patriarch, of the Hamlin Hotel where he lived 10 years.

The retired dentist was in his third-floor room watching the John Wayne version of "True Grit" with his visiting son, Greg, when he stood up and said he was an hour late taking his heart medicine. He walked to the medicine cabinet, dropped to one knee, fell over and died.

"I went to him and a neighbor came," his son said after Mr. Soldivela's Feb. 3 memorial. "But I couldn't do anything for him. He hadn't been sick, but he had heart problems. The paramedics were there immediately."

Mr. Soldivela died Jan. 28. He was 78. His son, who visited his dad once or twice a week, said he had auditioned for the Hamlin annual talent show the day before. Mr. Soldivela played the ukulele and four-string guitar and sang the songs he composed. He had won the contest twice and one year came in third.

"He wrote songs and poetry about things he thought about ever since I was a child," his son told the 14 mourners. "I liked the way he thought. He was a good father and a good friend. He taught me don't hit women, spoil 'em. And he spoiled me and my mother. But I'm at a loss here. He was one of my favorites."

The Hamlin desk clerk said Mr. Soldivela always had something nice to say and liked making people laugh. One day he called her and said if he

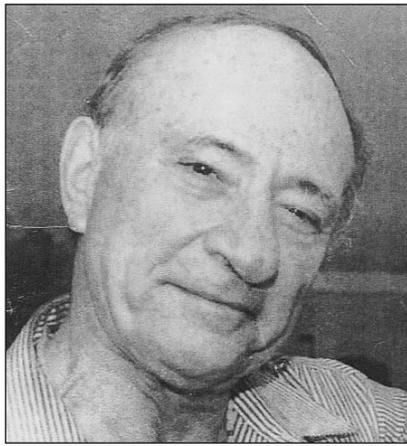


PHOTO COURTESY HAMLIN HOTEL

Joseph Soldivela

won the talent show contest he'd take her to dinner. And he did.

"A charming ladies' man," someone called him.

"He was more than a loving person," said another mourner. "He was an awesome person."

"Yes, a great man, my family man," said another. "He liked Joe Louis, I liked Ali."

"He was the patriarch of the Hamlin," his neighbor from the third floor piped up. "He leaves a big hole. And who's going to fill it?"

Mr. Soldivela was born in Los Angeles and got a degree from UC Berkeley but his son didn't know where he went to dental school. And he didn't know how long his father had a dental practice at Portola and Evelyn streets. Mr. Soldivela's wife died in 1997, he said.

After the memorial, a short, wiry woman burst into the community room carrying a guitar case and a large piece of cardboard. She couldn't

stop crying. Through her tears she said she was Joni Perkins, Mr. Soldivela's wife, but then corrected that to "girlfriend."

"He proposed to me but we weren't married," Perkins said. She first met Mr. Soldivela in a shelter in 1998 and they had hit it off.

She lives on the fourth floor and said they were together a lot, loved going out to the Olive Garden in Stonestown to eat. "He wrote a song about me and sang it in the talent show," she said. It won third place.

Perkins cried as she taped the cardboard to the wall near a piece of butcher paper some residents had signed as farewells to "Doctor Joe." The cardboard had information about the day's memorial on it, separate pictures of the smiling Doctor Joe and Perkins, and a poem Mr. Soldivela had written about his own death, "When I Am Gone."

*When I am gone, release me,
and let me go
I have so many things to see
and do
you mustn't tie yourself to me
with too many tears
but be thankful we had so many
good years.
Though you can't see or touch
me, I will be near
and if you listen with your heart,
you'll bear all my love around
you soft and dear. ■*

— TOM CARTER

ROY LINEROTH
Glide volunteer

Bad health is one thing, bad luck is another. Roy Linderoth had both.

Mr. Linderoth had emphysema and breathing problems, yet found the strength to volunteer regularly at Glide Memorial Methodist Church a block and a half from the Ritz Hotel, where he lived. Recently, his days were bright as he eagerly awaited a handsome check from the government.

"We went to Glide together," said his friend Bill Harlan at Mr. Linderoth's memorial Jan. 28 at the Ritz. "He was a good worker, a very good man and a dedicated volunteer. We did giveaways at Thanksgiving time."

But Mr. Linderoth's infirmity apparently caught up with him Jan. 23, when he was found dead in his first-floor room. He was 62.

The timing was unfortunate. Craig Martinez, one of four mourners, who had put a bouquet of roses on the table, said Mr. Linderoth was expecting a retroactive government check, which he thought might be SSI, of "about \$10,000."

Martinez said Mr. Linderoth often wasn't feeling well and had lost some weight but was energized by the thought of the incoming money, although he didn't tell Martinez what he might use it for.

"The check was to come the next week," Martinez said. "He was excited." ■

— TOM CARTER

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