

Boeddeker Park — now and then

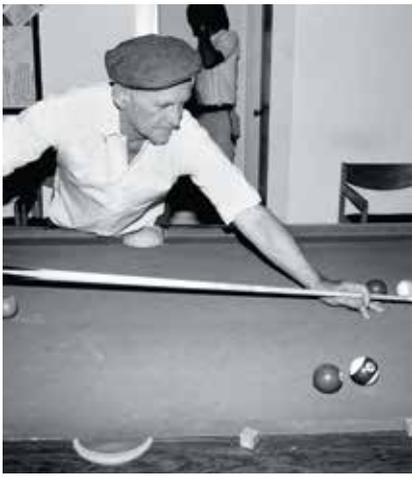


PHOTO BY BILL CARLSON

Koci perfects his shot on the pool table at Clementina Towers. “Every pool ball, every Skid Row had its characters,” Koci remembers of South of Market in 1923. “They were recognized for their eccentricity or fighting ability or how much wine they could drink or how many times they’d been in jail.”

Beat artist Frank Koci minces no words

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stand it?” I say, “Well, what are you gonna do?” This kind of place somewhere else costs \$250. I pay \$225, and I get this balcony, too.

They keep tearing stuff down. There was the last Chinese laundry here. The owner held out and got \$6,000. I have a friend, an artist, who was the last person on the block at Howard and Third. He refused to move but he finally gave in and signed a contract. They gave him \$6,000. He put the money down on a house in the Mission. That night they wrecked his place. I got \$2,500.

What did you do with it?

Put it in the bank. What else to do with it? A poor man puts money in the bank and then waits until he dies and then the state takes it away. I’m spending my money for essential things, like my own art.

When did you start to paint?

I started painting when I worked at CBC Studios in Los Angeles. I was a janitor there, but I had the opportunity to get into the place where they painted all kinds of sets for shows like “Queen for a Day” and Art Linkletter. I started using the paints in my spare time and had my first show in Hollywood — I made \$4. I told a critic I’d show him my best work, but he said, “I’ve seen your best ones and they’re the worst ones I ever saw in my life. With you, it’s the opposite of throwing pearls before swine.” I says to him, “That’s good. I like real good criticism.” Then, I took all my paintings and burned the hell out of them. Worst in the world? Best in the world? Who’s the critic? Picasso said that if you want to learn painting, learn from children because they’re uninhibited, haven’t been brainwashed. Look at people like Miró — they draw something like what a kid draws. It’s identical except dozens of critics get together and say it’s great. ■

This is the seventh in a series of photos and excerpts, edited by Marjorie Beggs, from the Neighborhood Oral History Project interviews that the Study Center conducted in 1977-78 under a CETA contract.

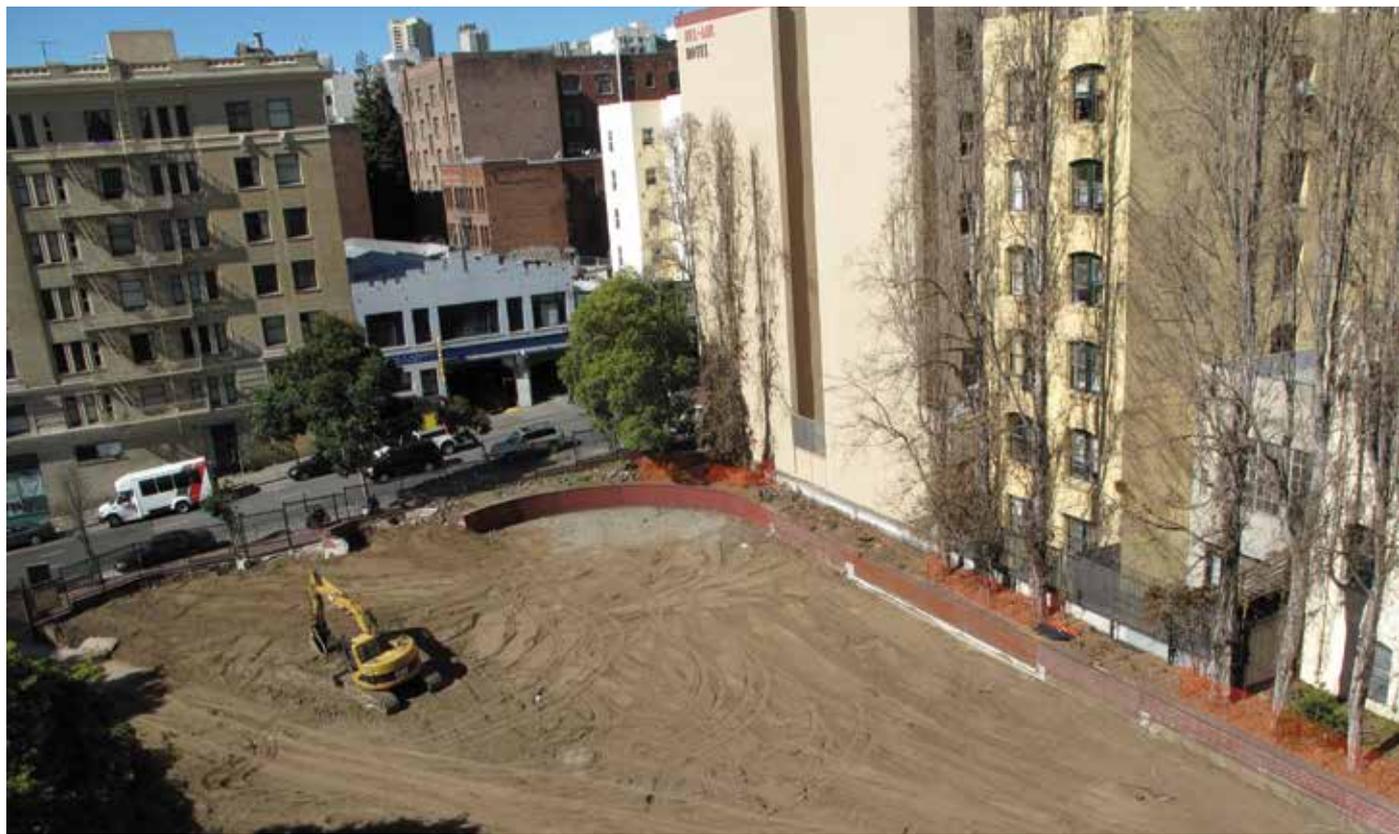


PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

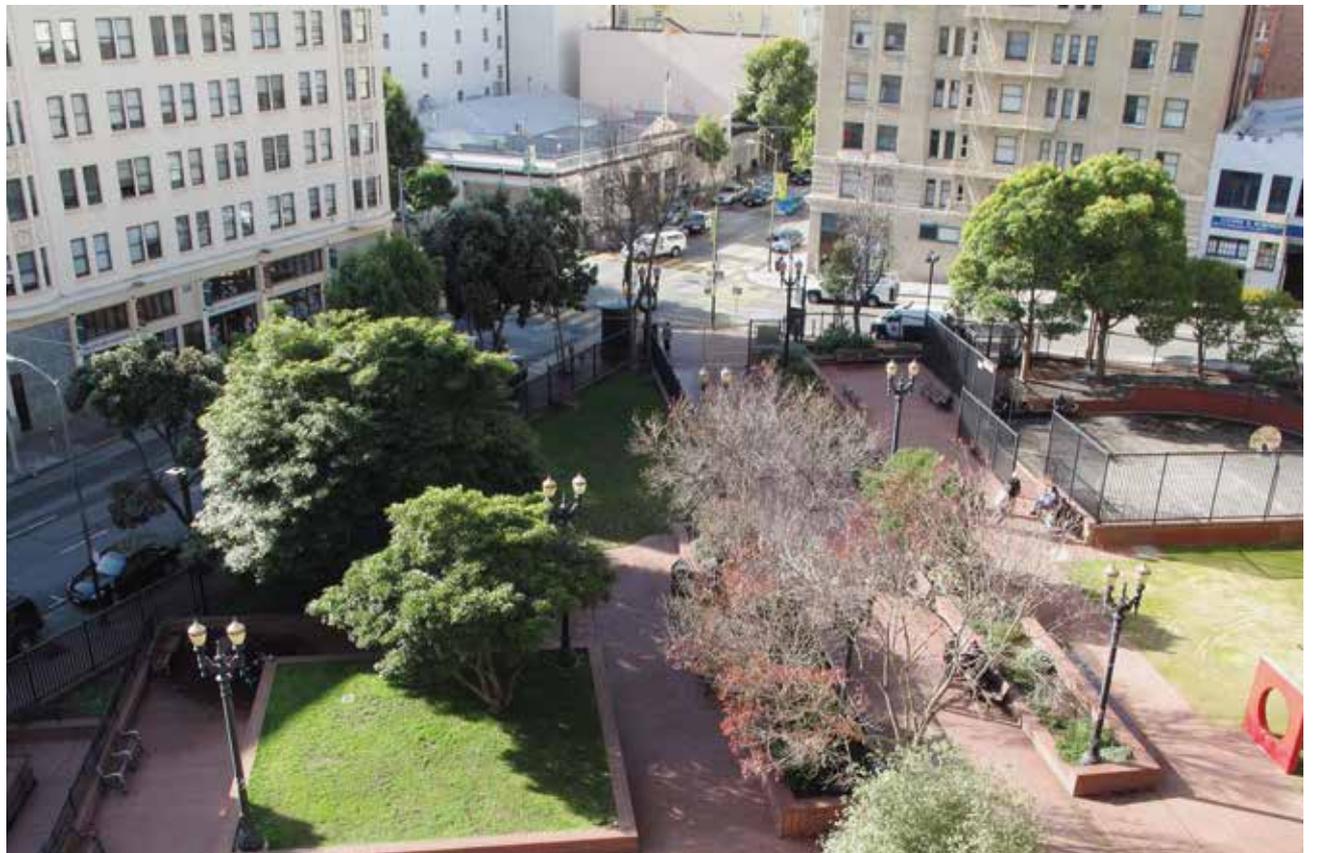
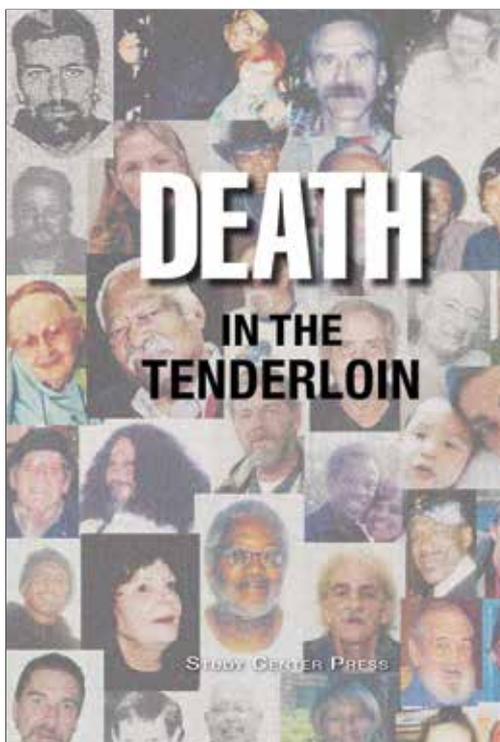


PHOTO BY LENNY LIMPOCO

Boeddeker Park, a fortress that was once the launching pad for a children’s track team, fell into virtual disuse in recent years, open only 15 hours a week because of Rec and Park budget cuts. Now, it is swept away. A \$6 million renovation will create a new park and fancy glass clubhouse by mid-2014. The question looms as to how will it be staffed for greater use. The top view from the fifth floor of the Windsor Hotel on Eddy Street, was taken in February. The “then” view was shot from the same location in December 2010.



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