

TIMOTHY DIMITRIS CHANDLER Always on stage



COURTESY OF WILLIAM PENN HOTEL

Irrepressible Timothy Dimitris Chandler, who once amused the tourist hordes at Disneyland portraying the floppy-eared cartoon character Pluto, never stopped performing, and would imitate his idolized pop stars by singing and dancing anywhere in the William Penn Hotel at a mere suggestion from his fellow residents.

A social worker, Chris Leonoudakis, once asked him about Mariah Carey's song "All I Want for Christmas (Is You). "And he broke into song and danced all around the room," she said at Mr. Chandler's Jan. 26 memorial in the community room. "You're not supposed to have favorites (as a social worker), but he was one of my favorite clients, a wonderful guy, always with a smile."

Slight, wiry and 5 feet 8, Mr. Chandler had showed no sign of illness, and friends said he disdained doctors during his two years at the Penn. But a friend missing his cheerful, hang-out company in the lobby checked his room Jan. 11 and found him dead at just age 48. It sent a shock wave through the hotel.

Mr. Chandler loved impersonating his favorites.

"I'd cut out pictures of Mariah Carey, Britney Spears and Janet Jackson from my People magazines and gave them to him," said Fred, one of the dozen mourners. "He'd put them on his walls."

Senior Support Services Case Manager Alice Price said Mr. Chandler not only sang their songs like "Miss Jackson" and "Rhythm Nation," but he had "the dance movements and all the expressions. He'd perform for you in a minute, and he was pretty good at it."

She thought that besides working at Disneyland, Mr. Chandler had performed extensively in drag in the city and "had traveled all over the United States." His mother lives in Florida, she said.

Mr. Chandler had been homeless before the San Francisco First program placed him at the William Penn where he became a unique, bright light, bringing smiles to everyone, the mourners said. He also went his own way. Once on a field trip to Alcatraz, recalled one, he left the group to go off by himself, only rejoining them at the tour's end. He was capricious, too, sometimes referring to himself as "Funkweeda," a nickname people thought he borrowed from a television character.

Sometimes his generosity of spirit would cost him. Fred said Mr. Chandler always left his room door open so he was often robbed. "And two days before he died," he added, "he was at the store getting a soda and was robbed."

Mr. Chandler got a handsome send-off with Rev. Paul Trudeau officiating and operatic soprano Molly Mahoney filling the room with her songs. The hotel furnished a two-sheet program and abbreviated biography of Mr. Chandler that his neighbor Patricia Logan read.

On a table in front, Price placed a

framed black-and-white photo of him with wild hair, looking like he couldn't wait to swing into action. In a vase next to it was a beautiful red Bromeliad flower towering above its deep green leaves. And for all, Support Services offered chicken and rolls, potato salad, sodas, pound cake and a fruit tray.

But a number of Mr. Chandler's friends didn't show up at the memorial, Price said later. They were hit too hard emotionally, or hadn't felt the loss yet, or had other reasons. Grief counseling, which the hotel routinely offers, was typically being ignored. But later, Price said, people come to talk to her "one-on-one."

"Just today (the day after the memorial) someone came in to tell me a story about Timothy." ■

— Tom Carter

ROBERT MCGRIFF Firefighter, ballplayer



COURTESY OF THE FAMILY

Charlie "Goody" Goodwin and Robert McGriff met by chance shooting hoops in the Ingleside gym. Goodwin was 17, and Mr. McGriff, originally from Phoenix, 20. And it went down fine.

Thereafter, they did a lot of things together, movies to concerts, and they both played ball but at different times at San Francisco City College, before getting a hot idea to help organize a semipro basketball team they called Blacks Incorporated. It had nine players who competed in several Bay Area leagues including one that Rec and Park Director Jon "Berg" Greenberg started at the Potrero gym.

The team was also a social club that did things like going to Reno together. It also organized Easter egg hunts and Halloween games for kids and played games against Muni and KSOL radio teams to raise funds. Sam Jordan, "the mayor of butcher town" who had a bar on Third Street, was the sponsor.

They got married, had kids, got divorced, all about the same time.

But in his late 20s, Mr. McGriff had become one of the first black firefighters in the San Francisco Fire Department, the best job he ever had, he had told Goodwin, who recalled that an injury eight years later had ended Mr. McGriff's career.

For no particular reason they drifted apart and lost track of each other. Goodwin hadn't seen his old pal for 15 years until one day a year ago when he was in the Tenderloin, someone told him that Mr. McGriff lived just around the corner at the Hamlin Hotel. So he went to see him, finding him with medical problems and in a wheelchair. After that, Goodwin visited regularly.

Goodwin was standing in the Hamlin Hotel's community room rapidly running out this tale on Jan. 29 to a half dozen mourners, the first to share his memories at Mr. McGriff's memorial.

"I'm his daughter's godfather, and I don't even know where she is," Goodwin said. "Maybe somebody knows and can tell me. I was going to visit him, planning on it, then I didn't and he died." Goodwin paused. "It's best to do what you feel at the time."

Mr. McGriff lived at the San Cristina and Jefferson hotels before coming to the Hamlin in 2002. He grew weaker as he aged. He periodically checked into

the Mai Tri Passionate Care facility on Divisadero Street, which treats AIDS patients.

The second week in January, Mr. McGriff went into St. Francis Hospital. He died there Jan. 15. He was 67.

Mr. McGriff's daughter, who lives in the Bay Area, sent the hotel a youthful color photo of her father, believed by Goodwin to be from his SFFD days. The Hamlin printed it on sheets of paper for the mourners along with his sunrise-sunset dates.

"That's not him," declared one mourner, unaware of the time gap.

Some of the mourners went back a long time with him. One called him "a good man." Another said he was "a great man."

It was different for resident Carolyn Merritt. "At first, years ago, we didn't get along. He didn't like me," she said, holding back tears. "But I just kept coming back. I kept after him."

"Every morning, I'd say I wonder how Bob's doing and I'd go there. I'd go to the store for him, clean up a bit — he couldn't walk very well. We'd watch TV together, he didn't want to play cards."

She struggled for control. "I'm sorry. I miss him so much. It's hard."

Goodwin, who took off work to attend the memorial, recalled afterward what kind of ballplayer Mr. McGriff was in their carefree salad days that had lasted eight or nine years. Goodwin was a guard and Mr. McGriff, despite being

just 6 feet 2, was a forward.

"Oh, he could jump, jump, jump," Goodwin said. "And he could dunk. But he always called me, 'Number one,' not Goody or Charlie. I don't know why. It was a long time ago." ■

— Tom Carter

JUDITH MOHR Lady of the old school

Judith Mohr left a lasting imprint at the West Hotel as a "good person, A wonderful woman, well-respected" and from "the old school," a handful of mourners said at her Jan. 26 memorial.

Ms. Mohr had lived at the West a little over two years but earned respect as "a very quiet lady" who regularly attended the hotel's Sunday afternoon Bible class.

Ms. Mohr used a walker but didn't seem to be in failing health when she was found dead in her room in mid-January. She was 75, outliving by 17 years the average life expectancy of women living in the Tenderloin, according to data collected by the Central City Extra.

"I met her at Sunday Bible study," said one man. "She was a good woman, pretty much old school, a pleasure to be around."

Part of Ms. Mohr's memorial was Molly Mahoney singing "Be Thou My Vision," accompanied by Tyler Richards on guitar. ■

— Tom Carter

MISSION ST
PUBLIC LIFE PLAN

MUNI FORWARD

THE SFMTA AND SF PLANNING ARE ACTIVELY WORKING TO IMPROVE THE 14 MISSION CORRIDOR. JOIN US AT AN OPEN HOUSE TO LEARN MORE!

The final open house of the Mission Street Public Life Plan will highlight the outcome of an 18-month community planning process that promotes Mission Street as a vital transit corridor with art, local commerce, and public spaces for everyone to enjoy. Please join us to celebrate the community work and to discuss next steps to make it happen!

Also at the open house, Muni will share proposed improvements for the 14/14L Mission that will enhance pedestrian safety and Muni reliability along Mission Street. This effort is part of Muni Forward's initiative to create a Rapid Network that prioritizes frequency and reliability on our most heavily used lines.

Proposed improvements will:

- Enhance pedestrian safety by removing turn conflicts at busy intersections
- Improve route reliability by optimizing transit stop locations
- Make boarding the bus quicker and more comfortable by adding transit sidewalk extensions
- Establish transit-only lanes to reduce Muni delays

February 18, 2015 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM

The Women's Building (Auditorium)

3543 18th Street, #8 | San Francisco, CA

Join staff at any time during the open house to ask questions and discuss these improvements.

If you are unable to attend or would like to provide comments online, please take our online survey at www.muniforward.com/14survey.