

Death of the Tenderloin

By GEOFF LINK

THE TENDERLOIN as we know it died Aug. 21. Its heart stopped beating when the lights went out at the 21 Club, the diviest dive bar in the neighborhood. A performance venue in the city's official Taylor Street "arts corridor," it was a community center by Tenderloin standards.

Tenderloin police called the intersection "ground zero for drugs and violence." It all was happening every day and night right outside the club's front windows: shootings and dope deals and crowds of menacing ne'er-do-wells a constant presence.

But inside the 21 Club, people felt safe. 98 Bottles of Beer on The Wall Inc., which owned the business, applied for a change of ownership May 14, and that deal was consummated the day the club closed.

Poet Ed Bowers for a time held monthly readings by locals as he accompanied their lyrics playing electric keyboard. Bowers immortalized the place with his little book, "21 Poems for the 21 Club," with photos by the late legendary Filipino artist, Lenny Limjoco, Study

Center's longtime photographer and designer.

Frank, the barman and club owner, made it all hum with longtime customers who imparted a social vibe perhaps akin to that of a watering hole in the jungle. He used to host group outings to Candlestick and has served on neighborhood boards of directors.

It was a regular stop on the night minister's circuit, a poets' hangout, frequented by newspapermen such as Edvins Beitiks and Warren Hinckle, musicians and messengers, old-timers and newbies.

The Tenderloin had always represented something exciting — cheap housing and cheap thrills. A red light district with after-hours hot spots, a dicey hood that was a haven of creativity, home to the Blackhawk, the Sound of Music, recording studios, the Warfield and the edgy EXIT Theatre.

We still suffer from Original Joe's abandonment. Now, with the passing of the 21 Club, it feels like the end of the line for the Tenderloin's old way of life. ■



LELNNY LIMJOCO, 2012

The 21 Club, at the intersection of drugs and violence, is the latest neighborhood victim of gentrification. It is to be replaced by a much bigger bar. Not a dive bar.

How tech helped cops nab suspect in Pier 14 killing

Chief gives details at neighborhood news roundtable

By JONATHAN NEWMAN

CHIEF GREG SUHR sat down with reporters from some neighborhood newspapers to answer their questions on safety, crime and the SFPD. The meeting was at the new Mission Bay police headquarters, a clean, strangely quiet public space so unlike the clamor and grime of the Hall of Justice on Bryant Street that is a block from the Flower Mart, but a world away from this new top cop shop that feels like the Main Library.

Over the course of 90 minutes in a large, light-filled ground floor meeting room on Aug. 7, Suhr spoke amiably to the Neighborhood Newspaper Publishers Association members. Topics ranged from his department's summer youth employment program to the broken relationship between SFPD and the Latino community and the tsunami of tech advances — smartphones, cloud-based storage of crime data, video security monitoring and computer tracking — that drives crime fighting today.

It was talk about tech that led to the chief's recounting of how Juan Francis-

co Lopez-Sanchez was so quickly apprehended in the killing of Kathryn Steinle on Pier 14 back in July, a tragedy that triggered Donald Trump's immigration rant and the debate over cities serving as sanctuaries for people in the country illegally. Suhr credited tech for the quick arrest of Lopez-Sanchez.

"Every officer in the department has a smartphone," Suhr said, SFPD-issued Samsung Galaxy S5s. "When the first officer responded to the shooting, a tourist stepped forward with a picture she had snapped of the shooter. She sent the picture to the officer's smartphone, and he sent it out to all SFPD personnel. I even got one at home. It was cool. In 20 minutes, officers were able to ID and arrest the guy."

This anecdote, in turn, served as a springboard into analysis of the policy that clears Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi, pilloried by politicians and the press for releasing Steinle's suspected killer four months before she died in her stunned father's arms.

Suhr defended the sanctuary policy, which many have blamed for the failure to keep Lopez-Sanchez in custody until he could be deported. "We've been a sanctuary city since 1989. I grew up in the department with it. I got no problem with it," Suhr said.

He noted that the due process ordinance amending the policy in 2013 allowed for "rearrested and convicted crim-

inals to be turned over." But it doesn't.

A close analysis of the ordinance the supervisors unanimously passed and Mayor Lee quickly signed belies Suhr's position. The ordinance says a local official "shall not" detain someone solely on the basis of an informal request from the feds unless that person has been convicted of a violent felony within the past seven years and a judge has heard evidence and found probable cause for the person to answer a current violent felony charge.

Lopez-Sanchez was certainly a rearrested and convicted criminal as Suhr implied, but his record was not for violent crimes, so Mirkarimi was not required to turn him over to the feds on an informal ICE request.

Suhr has heard no complaints about the newly drawn boundaries for the police districts inaugurated in July. Tenderloin Station expanded its jurisdiction across Market Street one block to Mission, and eastward to Third Street and west to South Van Ness. Previously, Tenderloin jurisdiction ended on the north side of Market Street, leaving Southern Station officers to handle crimes and misdemeanors on the SoMa side.

"It never made sense to me that one side of a major thoroughfare was in one district and the other side was in another," Suhr said, citing the old lines that split Market Street crime enforcement between Southern and Tenderloin stations.

"I heard a call come in this morning

for Tenderloin officers, and Southern's officers picked it up," Suhr said. That kind of cooperation and coordination between districts is crucial, Suhr believes, until more officers get deployed under Mayor Lee's plans to bring the department to the legislated full strength — 2,200 officers — by 2017.

Alexis Terrazas, editor of El Tecolote, questioned Suhr on the SFPD's relations with the Latino community, after the recent cop killings of Hispanics.

"The community trust is broken. We're doing some solid work to rebuild it, including a successful summer jobs program where 90% of the jobs were filled by youth from the Southeast and Mission districts. Gun violence is down, and we've found kids in our summer programs, more than a 1,000 in two years, get into fewer problems," Suhr said.

Sgt. Sherry Hicks fielded the question about the department's protocol for handling threatening dogs, prompted by the recent shooting of Felony Jack, a neutered pit bull that advanced on officers as they questioned his owner about drug paraphernalia.

"Right now, police academy cadets receive only two hours training in handling troublesome canines. We're crafting more training. But I'm happy to say Jack is recovering and he will be returned to his owner, although he's got a felony record now," Hicks said.

Suhr added a coda: "There are leash

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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