

DEOSIA HENDERSON
Musician and artist

Pride of place at his Raman Hotel memorial was not a photo of Deosia Henderson at the front of the room but one of his art pieces. Signed "OSI," the middle letters of his first name, the artwork colorfully combines abstract elements and practically over-the-top pointillism with a recognizable guitar — Mr. Henderson's instrument — subdued but demanding attention, perhaps a self-portrait of sorts.

"He was a musician who loved classic rock, and an artist," said Tigran Pell, his case manager at the SRO. "He did that painting two weeks before he died and gave it to me."

The Raman, 1011 Howard St., was Mr. Henderson's home for nine months after being homeless and living in shelters for years. The Colorado native died at the SRO in late July, according to Samara Miller, head of support services, who thought he was "in his 60s" adding that he didn't talk about any family.

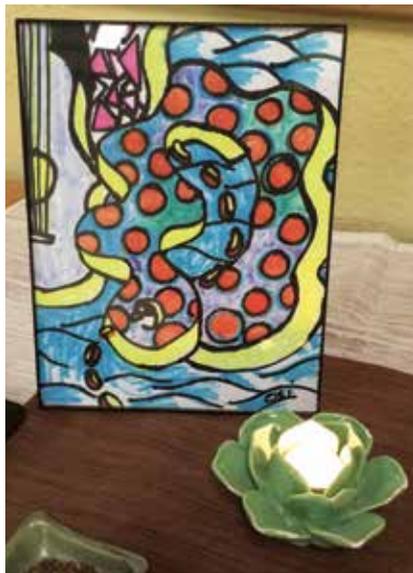
"His death was a surprise to all of us," Miller told the two Raman residents and four staff attending the memorial. "He was a very humble and sweet man who loved to tell stories and whose art was important to him. And he was so happy to be here after the shelters."

Miller, too, received one of Mr. Henderson's art pieces before he died.

Mel Beetle, the Raman's tenant organizer and 10-year resident of the SRO, said he got to know Mr. Henderson "somewhat, but not well" in the short time he lived at the South of Market SRO.

"I think he liked yellow," Beetle said, looking at the art work. "I know that he was a genuine and sincere person who cared for other people and who would have contributed here — he volunteered to be a hotel safety monitor, but then he passed away."

During the memorial, conducted by Michael Mallory, mourners were invited



Painting by Deosia Henderson that he completed two weeks before he died.

to follow Mallory in placing a pinch of incense on burning charcoal in a small dish and ringing a brass bell. Later, he asked them to sing along with a recording of "Amazing Grace" and invited people to record their memories of Mr. Henderson in a diary.

"It's been one year since I began conducting memorials," Mallory said. "With this one, this book will now be full."

He reminded the mourners, "To grieve is to love," and ended the service with a rock recording that Pell had told him Mr. Henderson liked. ■

— Marjorie Beggs

STEVIE L. NEWSOM
Troubled native son

Stevie Lafayette Newsom, a native son, died at S.F. General Aug. 27. He was 54.

Mr. Newsom, who spent long years of his adult life in jail, lived at the Hart-

land Hotel on Geary Street for the last six months of his life. Glaucoma, long untreated, had rendered him blind four years ago and this disability, coupled with the struggle to adapt from the enforced routine of life in custody to the unstructured freedom of daily existence outside the walls, proved difficult for him.

Mr. Newsom was raised in the Fillmore and attended Balboa High in the mid-'70s. He worked many years at Copy Copia in the Financial District. His family recalled the pride he took in reporting to work, well-dressed and on-time, earning his own living. But troubles and addictions beset him and steady employment gave way to crimes and jail sentences.

On Sept. 11, friends and fellow residents met in memorial to Mr. Newsom at the Hartland Hotel, led by Joao Mira Ingram of Quest4Light, a lay Buddhist ministry. In prelude, Stevie Wonder ballads played softly, a tribute to Mr. Newsom's preference for "the old school."

People paused before a table bearing a vase of white roses and lilies to ring a small chime for Mr. Newsom's spirit. Incense perfumed the room, and some made the sign of the cross. Ms. Ingram invited all to share thoughts of Mr. Newsom as "his soul travels the cycle of birth and death."

Many remembered him as a man quick to anger, frustrated that his blindness hampered his progress in the world, rendering him prone to numerous falls, including a recent horrific tumble down the Hartland's elevator shaft. He survived without crippling injuries.

Hartland resident Antionette Baines knew Mr. Newsom for six months: "He could be ornery as hell. He tried to hit me with his cane once," she said, "but I liked him."

"Stevie was very courteous," Mark Fleming recalled. "It was obvious that he suffered a lot. He always gave me a warm and friendly hello. I hope he's got

some peace."

Diana Noel, her miniature pinscher, Sonny, in tow, remembered Mr. Newsom as "a good man. I miss him dearly."

Mr. Newsom's short time at the Hartland left Brianna Varner with a quandary. "With his blindness, he couldn't see me, only hear my voice. He always called me Sir. I never figured out how to tell him I'm transgender," she said.

Mallory Cain, one of Mr. Newsom's case workers, remembered Mr. Newsom's anger: "I called him the Lion. He had a big roar, but there wasn't any meanness in it."

Jesse Greenwood hadn't known Mr. Newsom long. "He struggled, but he kept on going. That made him all right in my book," she said.

For Lori Dashiell, a Hartland manager, the memorial was an opportunity to rally round the memory of Mr. Newsom and forgive his temper.

"When Stevie had an outburst, he would apologize. He'd say, 'So sorry. I'll be good. You know what? He meant it every time. He was trying. He had a hard life and been through a lot, but he was very brave. I know where he's at, he can see now. He can find his keys at last," she said.

Mr. Newsom is survived by his mother, Bernice Ware, and his sisters, Gwenie, Valerie and Tarita. ■

— Jonathan Newman

CLARIFICATION

To clarify a point in "Super smack puts Public Health in crisis mode" (September): The Dope Project also distributes FDA-approved, prepackaged auto-injection kits worth \$300 or more. The manufacturer Kaleo has donated 1,300 of those to the program since last fall. ■

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Photo by Robbie Sweeney