

SRO memorial for 4 who died

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didn't heal. They moved into the Alexander June 1, and she changed his dressings three times a day before he went to the hospital for the last time. His last night, she said, he asked God over and over to take him. She lay down beside him and held his hand. The nurse came in an hour later and found him dead. He was 60.

"His last night," Mrs. Diaz whispered, "my husband, a good man, say, 'I will wait for you in heaven.'"

Kathleen Gannon had been at the hotel since 1999. She died at 52 in her room of a pulmonary disorder, or "natural causes," the medical examiner said. Few people knew the short, wide woman because she kept so to herself. Even her next-door neighbor couldn't say what Ms. Gannon was really like other than she was mannerly, quiet and alone.

"Mark was a good friend of mine," James Willis announced in a booming voice from the back. "He never had anything bad to say about people. And he was upset by evil. I'm sorry he's gone. We'll be poorer without him.

"We're here for you, Debra," Willis concluded, glancing over at Mark Scroface's girlfriend of 20 years, Debra Worchesger.

Worchesger and Mr. Scroface met in Healdsburg 23 years ago, she told The Extra two days earlier. He was a good plumber then. And after taking classes, he became a computer wizard, but didn't own one. He had a minister's license, too, and wrote religious poems. His favorite movie, she said, was "Michael," which starred John Travolta as an angel.

But heroin ruined him, she said. A narcon shot from paramedics two years ago was a life reprieve from an overdose.

She had knocked on his door for four days with no reply. An assistant manager found him, dead at 54, with his arm tied off and a needle stuck in his shirt.

"He was spiritual and that's what attracted me to him," Worchesger said. "I could have helped this time. But he had to do something for himself and didn't. Maybe it was a hot shot. Maybe he just said, 'Enough, let me out of it.'"

It is unlikely that anyone attending the memorial knew the life story of Linda Rae Lee, who died in the hospital of bone cancer at 62. Her next-door neighbor said only that she had once befriended her during a power blackout. Ms. Lee was painfully bedridden then and sharing a two-room space on the 11th floor with her husband, George Ray Lee, 79, also bedridden.

Lee told The Extra two days before the memorial that his quick-witted wife had a

career as Honey West, a stripper and fan dancer. She once married into the Kansas City, Mo., mob, he said, but the guy got rubbed out in a garage door explosion. Lee said she also went to City College and S.F. State and nearly got her law degree in her 50s from Hastings. She had managed a hotel for him here once and worked as a vault officer in Nevada, he said. They were married 25 years ago in San Quentin when he was doing a stretch. Their relationship, Lee said, was platonic.

Toward the end of the ceremony, the Rev. Hope slipped a white stole over her shoulders. It had symbols of Christianity on it and was made for her by her mother shortly before she died.

"All of us have a lot of grief in the Tenderloin," the Rev. Hope said. And she read scriptures about setting "troubled hearts at rest" and God "wiping every tear from their eyes" and souls finding "peace at last."

This memorial ended, as do all with the Rev. Hope as officiant, with all the mourners holding hands in a circle. She offered a short prayer and asked people to turn to their neighbor and give the "sign of peace." Most were confused by this until they saw people hugging each other. Then they followed suit. It seemed like both a conclusion and a beginning. ■

WILLIAM HAMILTON A smoker, quiet, generous

William Hamilton was a familiar sight around the Jefferson Hotel on Eddy Street. He pulled along his 2-foot oxygen cylinder on wheels everywhere, its plastic tubes going to his nose, and all the while he smoked cigarettes.

"He smoked until the day he died," said hotel Manager Brian Samuel.

A dozen of Mr. Hamilton's friends and acquaintances gathered at the hotel to pay their respects on Aug. 3. "John A" wrote a poem and drew an abstract with colored pencils. It was placed alongside a page bearing the signatures of 50 Jefferson residents that was lying on a table near a bouquet of flowers.

No one in the room knew Mr. Hamilton very well, although he had lived at the Jefferson at least five years. They guessed he was in his mid- to late-70s. They said he was polite but kept to himself. He frequented the Lafayette Coffee Shop around the corner. Samuel said people didn't know about his generosity. Mr. Hamilton had a retirement income, Samuel said, and he sometimes helped people pay their rent when they came up short.

City Medical Examiner Charles Cecil said Mr. Hamilton died of emphysema. He was 56.

— TOM CARTER

ROGER JACKSON A private person

Homeless for years, Roger Jackson had had a roof over his head and a bed to sleep in for only a few months when he died Aug. 10 at Civic Center Residence. Mr. Jackson was 61.

He always seemed to be on the go, said a hotel staff member. Few at the hotel knew him because he'd been there such a short time — just five weeks — and he seemed like a very private person. Before moving there, he'd lived at the Windsor Hotel for two months.

One of his case workers at S.F. General, where he was being treated for cancer, said Mr. Jackson told him that music was an important part of his life and that he played flute and guitar. The case worker also said he'd heard that Mr. Jackson had family in Oakland and had lived all his life in the

Bay Area.

During an Aug. 24 memorial for Mr. Jackson, the Rev. Glenda Hope talked about how people who are seriously ill and homeless often die shortly after they get off the street.

"I think being in a place like this provides them with a sense of safety and dignity," Hope said. "It takes away the fear that they'll die on the street and no one will notice."

— MARJORIE BEGGS

RON MALIGON The model tenant

In some corner of the Philippines there is a great sadness over the death of Ron Maligon, who lived 10 years at the Ritz Hotel and died there. Mr. Maligon was 57.

Unlike many of his fellow residents, Mr. Maligon was independent and held a five-day-a-week job he liked at the airport. He chose to live quietly and frugally, earning the praises of the hotel clerk, manager and others. They said Mr. Maligon was a model tenant who paid his rent on time, never complained, was polite, quiet, helpful, giving and caring.

"I only saw him when he paid his rent," Manager Kelvin Nance said. "He was like an invisible person."

Six of Mr. Maligon's friends gathered around a long black table with a blue vase graced by white daisies in the first-floor kitchen overlooking Eddy Street to bid him

good-bye. A reading of the scriptures fought with the clamor of traffic outside.

"He had none of the socio-psychological problems that many around him had and I enjoyed talking to him," recalled Otto Duffy, who knew for him 12 years. "He was a strong person. I figured with all the money he sent back to the Philippines, he'd go back there and retire."

But the money was for "many relatives," Assistant Manager Eric Asuncion said. "He was very generous."

— TOM CARTER

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TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

Outreach and Community Events September 2004

Health Education Forum
Topic: Medical Treatment & Prison
Speaker: Judy Ricci
Date/Time: September 22, 2004, 6 pm

HIV Education Forum
Topic: HIV Medication Adherence and Tolerance
Speakers: Annette Brands, Community Relations Manager, Agouron Pharmaceuticals & Corey Clark, Peer Advocate, TARC
Date/Time: September 22, 2004, 6 pm

Location for Forums: 175 Golden Gate Ave. (St. Boniface Marion Group Room); light meal will be provided

Client Advisory Panel CAP
Topic: Come talk with Alexander Fields, Consumer Board Representative; Tracy Brown, TARC's Executive Director and program managers about plans for TARC. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.
Date/Time: September 9th, 11:30-1:00

Volunteer for TARC
Orientation: September 15, 16, 17, and 19, 183 Golden Gate Ave.
You must pre-register for volunteer trainings. Stop in and see Ned Howey at TARC or call Ned at (415) 934-1792

**For current Groups schedule call into 183 Golden Gate Avenue
For more Info Call 415.431.7476 or go to www.tarc.org**

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