

Big fuss over street toilet at Boeddeker Park

Should it be moved? Extra finds David inside shooting up

BY TOM CARTER

SPIRITS were up in Boeddeker Park on Aug. 10. That sun-blessed day, a swarm of young people were enjoying a block party put on by Youth With a Mission, a nearby Christian organization. Some were gleefully trying jump shots on the basketball court. A trio sang as the crowd milled about, the down-and-outers on the benches largely ignored.

Standing next to a cotton candy machine, the organization's Tia Shaw guessed 200 people had attended the quarterly event.

Thirty feet inside the park's Eddy and Jones entrance two TL bicycle cops stood watch. Up by the recreation building, Officer Gary Peachy, whose beat for nine years has included the park, was standing at parade rest on the brick sidewalk when he decided to

check the indoor toilet again. He went inside, loudly asking, "Anybody in here?" A man in his late 50s scurried out of the stall, pulling up his pants, mumbling and complaining.

"He was in here 10 minutes ago," Peachy said. "He was nodding off on the toilet. He's been shooting up."

The man took offense and started yelling that he was being hassled. He's not an addict, he said. He is on methadone. Peachy told him to keep his voice down and move on. The man pushed his sleeves up and thrust out forearms that showed knotty rivulets of ugly scar tissue. "See," he growled, his voice rising, "no fresh tracks!"

"Let's check the toilet at the entrance," Peachy said. He guided his bicycle down the sidewalk through the crowd. The drug-beleaguered public toilet at the Eddy and Jones park entrance has become the focus of public hearings.

As Peachy passed the bicycle cops he let them know where he was headed. One of them, Officer Mark Trierweiler, in April helped him bust five people inside the toilet. Peachy said all had syringes, two had warrants and went right to jail.

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PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The police station, catty-corner from the toilet, maintains unreliable video surveillance 24/7.

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The Rev. Glenda Hope officiates at the memorial for four Alexander Residence tenants.

Memorial for 4

Feliciano Diaz
Kathleen Gannon
Mark Scroface
Linda Rae Lee

BY TOM CARTER

DEATH cast a pall over the Alexander Residence in August when four residents died within days of each other, two at San Francisco General and two in the 179-unit Eddy Street hotel. The unusual coincidence gave residents a righteous pause, if not mortality jitters, and grief set in like a low fever.

"It really hit us, tenants and staff," said manager Theresa Flores. "It is really, really hard for people. Basically, seniors are here and some have lived here more than a decade."

About a third of the residents are Filipino, a quarter Chinese, the remainder mixed, according to the hotel's social workers.

Flores said a dozen tenants came to the office to update their emergency contact sheet. The staff suggested having a grief and loss seminar and doing more frequent "well checks." Now, only about 20% of residents request them. One deceased man hadn't been discovered for four days.

But, to bring a measure of peace and assurance to the hotel, one immediate line of action was apparent: Call the Rev. Glenda Hope for a memorial service.

The Rev. Hope is a legend in the gritty, low-income Tenderloin for giving a religious closure to a life. And every life, to her, is worth

celebrating.

Slight, 5 feet tall, the Presbyterian minister with a soft Georgia drawl started San Francisco Network Ministries to serve the Tenderloin in 1972. She and staff member, Catholic Sister Claire, started the memorials in the late 1970s after a woman jumped to her death from the fifth floor of the Dalt Hotel.

The Alexander request was one of an average of two a week she receives from SROs. But a memorial for four at one hotel is rare.

"Every one of us is a child of God," the Rev. Hope said after introducing herself to the gathering of 24 residents and staff seated on the mezzanine. The memorial honored Feliciano Diaz, Kathleen Gannon, Mark Scroface and Linda Rae Lee. The four lives reflected an intriguing Tenderloin diversity.

"It is important that we remember who has been born," Hope said, then read from the scriptures followed by a prayer. This validates those who grieve and gives "dignity to all the people here, not just to the people who died."

Behind her a memorial table held candles, statues of the Virgin Mary and two angels, and cards signed by the residents. Above the table, flyers proclaimed the names of the deceased and their birth and death years. Across the mezzanine the staff and volunteers had laid out fruit, croissant sandwiches and sodas.

As always, Hope invited people to speak about the departed.

Maria Diaz, a tiny lady of 73, rose to speak quietly in a quavering voice about her late husband, Feliciano, a Muni driver for five years who died of diabetes. In an interview the day before, she told The Extra more about him than she was able to say here.

Mr. Diaz was a handsome man who loved late nights of mahjong and dancing. He squired her nine years, taking her to church but never going inside himself. Then his disease got real bad. They married last February. Some weeks later his leg was amputated. But the wounds

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