

**KATHLEEN FITZPATRICK**  
A caring nurse

The Aranda Residence lost its welcoming angel when Kathleen Fitzpatrick, a nurse who thought more of helping others than herself, died in San Francisco General Hospital on March 24 of meningitis, pneumonia and hepatitis. She was 53.

A dozen friends who gathered at her memorial remembered the 5-foot-3, 90-pound woman as the first to greet newcomers to the Aranda with a sweet smile, a card and a gift basket of food that she prepared. She told them they could stop by anytime at her room on the fifth floor where she invariably offered them food. But the friends also didn't hesitate to say how stubborn Ms. Fitzpatrick was, a characteristic that no doubt worked against her in the end. As a nurse, she could give pills but wouldn't take them.

"She was one of the sweetest, most loving and stubborn people I ever knew," her common-law husband of 15 years, John Wells, told the group. "She was always giving and caring - she'd almost rather look out for someone else than herself."

In the newly remodeled six-story Aranda, a DHS master lease hotel run by the



Tenderloin Aids Resource Center, Wells said he first met Ms. Fitzpatrick at Murio's Trophy Room bar, a Haight Street institution.

"She was a live-in caretaker nurse five days a week," he said. "She

had weekends off and shopped at the Cala across the street."

Their budding romance flourished with hikes and picnics in Golden Gate Park. Wells, a graduate of the Marine Cooks and Stewards School in Calistoga, fried their picnic chicken. "She liked to shop for antique plates, too," he said.

They moved into the Aranda 10 years ago, shortly after she surprised him by quitting her job.

After contracting HIV and hepatitis C, she steadfastly ignored her medications despite her failing health, Wells said. Even case workers couldn't get her to take the meds. When Ms. Fitzpatrick went into the hospital in February, she was unable to speak. She wrote notes to Wells when he visited. She died six weeks later.

— TOM CARTER

**MASAHIRO OKADA**  
Sensitive artist

Masahiro Okada was kind and soft spoken, a man of 40 who kept to himself,

caused no trouble and was much appreciated by the his fellow residents at the Star Hotel on Mission Street. He was also more deeply troubled than his social workers could see. No one guessed that he was a gifted artist, either, and only a few knew he was gay.

Whatever Mr. Okada's inner turmoil was, it ended on March 28, nine months after he moved to the Star. He hanged himself in his third-floor room. He was discovered by the janitor, along with his easels and scores of pictures of beautiful flowers drawn in a "delicate Japanese style," said someone who had seen them. The suicide sent a shock wave through the hotel.

"This took a big chunk out of me," said desk clerk Patricia Abrams in the dimly lighted room off the lobby where a dozen mourners sat before a table with a single candle and a blurry picture of Mr. Okada on it. "He was always so kind to everyone."

"I lost it for a day or so," another said. "Quiet, unassuming people are taken for granted in this society," one man said, his tone matter-of-fact but bordering on bitterness. "We're a winner-loser society and winner take all. There's no effort to look beyond the surface. He barely made the radar."

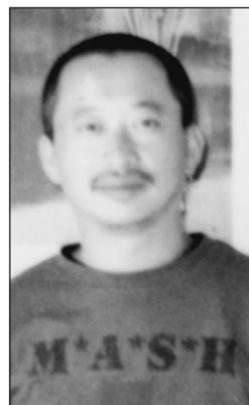
The Department of Public Health had already started grief counseling at the SRO hotel when the Rev. Glenda Hope agreed to officiate at Mr. Okada's memorial. She leaves the Tenderloin for such services maybe three times a year, only if requested. And the "special circumstances" here were compelling, she said. By coincidence, a cameraman filmed the memorial as part of a history project on San Francisco Network Ministries that the Rev. Hope and her late husband founded 34 years ago in the Tenderloin.

"Sadness, confusion, pain, grief and fear," she said, "when they come to you, name them, and let them go."

Michael Saunter, a mental health worker, rose and said he had worked with Mr. Okada in a Mission Mental Health Clinic program. Saunter said the death that freed the troubled man brought up sadness and joy in him, a poignant ambivalence found in a song that an old Japanese woman taught Saunter as a child. The song was about winter ending and cherry blossoms beginning to bloom. He sang it in Japanese in a deep bass voice that resonated and filled the still room.

DPH case worker Galileo Mendrano had known Mr. Okada eight months, he said, since around the time he moved into the Star. He got to know Mr.

Okada fairly well and was shaken by the suicide. Mendrano believed he had attended a Japanese University to study art and wasn't sure if he had any work history. He was gay and had gay friends, Mendrano said, but he "was very private about that"



and belonged to no gay associations. His parents, who live in Japan, apparently couldn't handle it.

"He wanted to patch up his relationship with his parents, bring it (being gay) to acceptance and he struggled with it," Mendrano said. "He became a Christian four or five years ago."

Afterward, the Rev. Hope and three others went upstairs to bless No. 318, Mr. Okada's room. But by posted order of the medical examiner they couldn't enter. The Presbyterian minister explained that sometimes she blesses a room to make it right for those who feel a suicide room is "bad luck," or even "haunted."

She and the three others put their hands up high on the door in the narrow hallway, a scene the cameraman recorded. Mr. Okada was seeing the "beauty of the world without any filters," the minister said, and it was okay for him "to go into the hands of a loving God."

Property manager Lois Butler said later that Mr. Okada's art work found inside was turned over to his visiting parents who gave it all to one of his friends. ■

— TOM CARTER

*Tenderloin benefit district seeking board members*

The Tenderloin Community Benefit District, which cleans and beautifies the neighborhood using a special tax on property owners, has been operating with a 22-member interim board of directors since it was formed in August. Now it's getting ready to elect a permanent board of 15 members. The number of interim members who will apply is unknown, said Elaine Zamora, benefit district manager, but she expects seats to be open.

The by-laws and the city legislation that launched benefit districts require that 20% of the board be people who rent or lease businesses, including nonprofits, within the district boundaries.

"There aren't any required percentages for the remaining members," Zamora said. "But the by-laws committee looked at that 20% for businesspeople and suggested that 60% be property owners and 20% residents and at-large members."

Using those percentages, the board is required to have nine property owners and three each of business renters and residents.

Applications, due May 29, describe duties as a minimum of four to six hours a month of meetings and "proactive volunteer work on behalf of the district." Board members' terms are for two years. Information: 440-7570 or ezamora@sbcglobal.net. ■

— MARJORIE BEGGS



**TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER**  
**Outreach and Community Events May 2006**

**HIV Services Forum**  
Topic: What You Should Know About Hep C  
Speaker: Andrew Reynolds, SF City Clinic  
Date/Time: Wednesday, May 17, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

**Health Promotion Forum**  
Topic: STDs and Me  
Speaker: Andrew Reynolds, SF City Clinic  
Date/Time: Wednesday, May 24, 2006, 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Location for Forums: TARC, 191 Golden Gate Ave.  
light meal will be provided

**Client Advisory Panel**  
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: Wednesday, May 10, 11:30 am - 1 pm;  
Wednesday, May 31, 11:30 am - 1 pm

**Volunteer for TARC**  
Orientations: Friday, May 19, 10 am - 5 pm (lunch provided)  
183 Golden Gate Ave.  
You must pre-register for volunteer trainings. Stop in/call Emilie (415) 934-1792.

For current groups' schedule or for more information  
call: 415.431.7476 or go to [www.tarc.org](http://www.tarc.org)



**TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER**  
health promotion • social services • HIV housing  
For more information visit [www.tarc.org](http://www.tarc.org)