

**KATHERINE HART**  
Adored her grandkids

Katherine Hart had a heart attack at the Elm Hotel, where she lived for 13 years. Paramedics performed CPR as they wheeled her through the lobby, but she died shortly afterward in the hospital. It was June 29. Ms. Hart was 66.

Too overcome by her death to attend a July 8 memorial, her partner of 13 years asked Anna Cooper, the Elm's assistant support services manager, to give everyone his message: Ms. Hart had lived in San Francisco for 30 years, and she adored her six grandchildren and her stuffed animals.

At the memorial, a table in the hotel lobby held a large candle and a vase with a bouquet of white flowers: roses, gladiolas, mums and lilies set off by fresh greens. Lacking a picture of Ms. Hart for the table, management had framed her name with her birth and death dates.

Hotel Services Manager Wes Flowers noted that while Ms. Hart wasn't in good health — she needed a wheelchair to get around — she was someone people were glad to pass in the hall.

"She was always witty, making the best of a bad situation," Flowers said.

"Katherine always had a smile," Cooper said. "She was a very pleasant lady and she will be missed." ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

**JOHN TRIPLETT**  
U.S. Navy veteran

When Episcopal Community Services began providing supportive housing services to residents of the Elm Hotel in 2004, staff found a most willing helper in John Triplett.

He not only was a member of the resident council, advocating changes to improve conditions for his neighbors, he also organized the annual resident "picnic" — held in the lobby — and took responsibility for a nicety seen in few SROs: free coffee three times a week, which he made in a huge urn that sat on a table in the lobby. Often there were free cookies as well.

Mr. Triplett had lived at the Elm for 20 years when he died June 26 of liver cancer. Ten residents and staff attended a memorial for him July 3. Mr. Triplett, a veteran who had served in the Navy, was 67. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

**CHRISTOPHER CLANTON**  
'Lightning wit and infinite jest'

When Connie Clanton visited her brother, Christopher Clanton, at St. Francis Hospital, she asked him if there was anything she could get for him.

"Chris was intubated for pneumonia at the time and he could barely speak and couldn't eat," she said, "but he let me know he wanted Reese's peanut butter cups."

Her brother had been in and out of St. Francis Hospital several times before he died July 7 at age 47, and she recalled his last days for mourners gathered for his July 16 memorial at the Elm Hotel. Those days were precious to her, she said, because until she heard about his failing health in May, she hadn't seen him for many years.

"Sam — that was Chris' nickname — always loved to eat," she said. "Our mother, who couldn't travel here today, wrote this poem and sent it with me to read."

Sam liked nearly every kind of food.  
Oranges, apples, nuts and cheese  
And when his mother gave him carrots,  
he'd say, "I want more of these."

Brussels sprouts and cabbage,  
Celery and green beans.  
How to get enough,  
He'd plot and plan and scheme.

"Give me lots of vegetables,  
meat and potatoes too.  
I will eat them one by one,  
Or even in a stew."

"Cereal and crackers,  
muffins, bread and jam,  
milk and eggs and plenty of juice,  
I can eat them, yes I can."

Only one food,  
Sam strongly resisted.  
Broccoli he would not eat,  
He stubbornly insisted.

"Don't give me broccoli,  
Mother if you please.  
I don't want to eat them.  
They look like little trees."

"You're right," his mother said,  
trying her very best,  
trying not to laugh  
while Sam ate all the rest.

Mr. Clanton's neighbor across the hall at the Elm, C.J. Flanagan, remembered him fondly as someone who ate popcorn all the time and was very quiet. "But every now and then," she said, "he'd play music really loud on his radio for three minutes, then shut it off."

Mr. Clanton grew up in Bakersfield, the middle child of five siblings, and lived in many locales, including Napa, where he worked in wineries. He moved into the Elm three years ago. No one knew how long he'd lived in San Francisco, but Connie Clanton believes it was 10 years or more.

"He was the smartest of all of us," she said. "He was a man of lightning fast wit and infinite jest. At St. Francis he was almost a celebrity because of his cheerfulness."

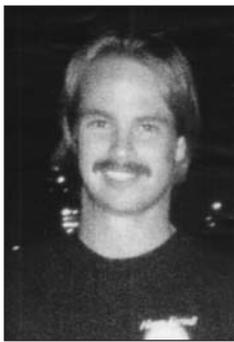
Matloub Rahmey, a physical therapist at St. Francis Hospital, recalled Mr. Clanton as a "sweet and appreciative man. I taught him some breathing techniques that seemed to help him. It was a gift to have known him," he said.

Mr. Clanton's appreciation spilled over into much of his life. Before he died, he told his sister about the things that had made him happy in recent years: moving into the Elm, a Care Not Cash hotel, after being homeless, and working with the gardeners at Golden Gate Park through the city's PAES (Personal Assisted Employment Services) program, which gives employable adults a cash stipend and work-related education and training.

Nanette Clanton, another sister who lives in Texas and who also came to San Francisco to see her brother in his last days, said the family had lost track of him almost 20 years ago in "a conflict over lifestyle." Still, to her, he was the brother who was "so good-looking, we always wondered why he didn't go to Hollywood. And he loved to laugh and didn't like any fuss — he sure wouldn't want to see us bawling over him," she said, trying not to cry.

At the end of the memorial, Connie Clanton opened a shopping bag filled with Reese's peanut butter cups, which she piled near a picture of her brother. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS



**ERNIE MERCHANT**  
On the cover of TNDC's Strategic Plan

Ernie Merchant, the face of the moment of TNDC, but for 15 years the heart of the Ritz Hotel, died in June after battling illnesses for several months.

The former nurse's aide and maintenance man greeted each day with a smile, was generous and got along with everybody, said the three friends who attended his memorial June 11.

Mr. Merchant was one of the Ritz's best-liked residents.

"He was a beautiful human being," said one man. "He shared with everybody and he loved (doing it)."

A black and white photo that was taken of Mr. Merchant, wearing a hat and jacket in front of TNDC's Ambassador Hotel, graces the cover of the nonprofit developer's "Strategic Plan, 2008-2012," along with a color photo of the beautiful hotel itself. His friends said he once worked at the Ambassador, but the photo, showing his stoic but warm likeness, was a random choice among many of TNDC residents.

Mr. Merchant died May 20 at Pacifica's Gift of Love AIDS hospice, run by the Missionaries of Charity, after fighting failing health for months. He was 69.

Mr. Merchant left his hometown of Middletown, Ohio, to make his life in the Bay Area, the friends said. He served in the Army but didn't go overseas. He had a brother but lost track of him, and was once married but had no children. Mr. Merchant was a nurse's aide at UCSF Medical Center and S.F. General, and in maintenance at the nearby Ambassador Hotel and at other hotels.

Tyrone Perry, a 12-year friend, said that in January he didn't see Mr. Merchant for a week. Staff said he went to the hospital and never returned.

"He was an energetic man and took pride in himself," Perry said. "He helped people individually, and shared his food and his room."

Three bouquets in cellophane lay on a table without a vase in the hotel's community kitchen where the memorial was held. ■

—TOM CARTER



PHOTO COURTESY TNDC



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