

ESTELITA CATALIG
Social worker

More than 80 mourners attended a memorial at Canon Kip Senior Center for case manager Estelita Catalig who died unexpectedly of a stroke April 2.

The ever cheerful Ms. Catalig had been healthy and working with the frail and elderly and homeless seniors. When she didn't show up for work March 31, a check of her Daly City home found her unconscious on her bed. She was taken to Seton Medical Center where she died two days later. She was 56.

Her death sent a shock wave through the Episcopal Community Services center at 702 Natoma St. where the devoted Ms. Catalig had worked for two years, sometimes seven days a week, friends said.

Jennie Chavez said the Manila-born Ms. Catalig had just completed the state's-38-hour Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program to advise the elderly on Medicare. The group had planned a lunch May 15 to honor the graduates.

"I called her Ate, meaning big sister in Tagalog," Chavez said. "She had just become registered and we were planning a volunteer appreciation. She was very proactive and always trying to resolve problems, and she had great follow-through. This (sudden death) makes you think about your own life."

Korki Lagbao felt the same. He was Ms. Catalig's close friend and called her "Telly," the nickname she used in her email address. They often dined at Filipino restaurants and he took her once to Pacifica, where she had not been. He told the group he had visited the unconscious woman at the ICU ward where a swarm of grieving people had gathered to find out her condition.

"It always amazed me when she would say, 'There's so little time for helping,'" Lagbao, a Homeless Connect volunteer said. "I didn't know what she meant until today. She worked seven days a week. And I promise, in her memory, to do more."

Prayers were said at the memorial, scripture was

read. There was group singing with sheet music provided, and songs from the five-piece Canon Kip

Senior Center band plus several soloists. Caseworker James Powell sang a cappella "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" in a rich bass voice and finished in a dramatic falsetto.



"She was a social worker 35 years and started in the Philippines," said Canon Kip board President Pablo Wong. "She worked in Saudi Arabia, too, before she came here. She leaves long-lasting footprints. And she was an inspiration to serve the underserved."

Bobby Bogan said "she walked with her heart in her hand" and was "a very loved entity in this family."

Ms. Catalig, the eldest of nine children, earned a bachelor of science in social work and a master's from the Asian Institute in the Philippines. She held various counseling and development jobs there from 1974 to 2001, including a stint with Habitat for Humanity. She went away for seven years in the 1980s to be a personnel counselor in Saudi Arabia. She came to the United States in 2002 and was a Life Skills trainer in Gilroy for four years before coming to Canon Kip Senior Center.

Afterward, as more people filled the room, a buffet lunch was served in back. In the lobby, the personnel sign-in board still listed her name. ■

—TOM CARTER

LEONARDO DIZON
Filipino WWII vet

Friends of Leonardo Dizon bid the World War II veteran from the Philippines farewell in a lengthy Catholic memorial service March 31 at the Alexander Residence where he lived 16 years.

Mr. Dizon, whose forebearers came from Pampango Province on Luzon, came to the Alexander in 1993. He was taken in failing health Feb. 27 to St. Francis Convalescent Pavilion in Daly

City, where he died less than three weeks later. He was 89.

Mr. Dizon was deeply religious but wasn't Catholic. It made no difference to The Rev. Virgil Bartolome of St. Michael's parish, who had been invited by social worker Betty Duran. He celebrated a Mass during which the 25 mourners — all but four were women — prayed often for Mr. Dizon, took Communion, and sang songs, one of them, "Santo," in Tagalog.

One man said that he had amused Mr. Dizon every time he saw him.

"When I first met him I called him Leo DiCaprio," the man said. "Every time I saw him I called him that and he'd laugh."

But little was learned about Mr. Dizon during the 75-minute ceremony.

Dalisay Calubad, a middle daughter of Mr. Dizon's six children, here from the Philippines, said afterward that her father had not been eligible for the Filipino vets benefits contained in President Obama's Feb. 17 stimulus bill. A section provides \$198 million for one-time pensions to 15,000 Filipino vets who have waited 60 years for promised benefits that were never delivered. Mr. Dizon served in the U.S. Army Forces Far East that was created in 1941, but Calubad did not know exactly when. He hadn't been a prisoner of war, she said.

Duran said the quiet Mr. Dizon had been a model resident and had once initiated an in-house Bible study group. He was also an avid fisherman who went out alone to fish off the pier at Aquatic Park, she said.

"He caught fish and crabs and gave them away to people here," Duran said. "He was very generous."

The mourners ate bowls of arroz caldo, a Filipino porridge of rice and chicken, prepared by resident Carol Moratillo. ■

—TOM CARTER

LOUIS WILLIAMS AND TED CARSON
Tribute to two at the Empress

Displayed at the front of the Empress Hotel's community room were tangible remembrances of two residents who died in April — Louis Williams' cane and Ted Carson's plaid bathrobe, black watch cap, glasses and cane. On the stereo was "Everything I Have Is Yours," a cut from the album of the same name by Billy Eckstein, one of Mr. Carson's favorites.

Both men had known each other when they were homeless and living in a shelter, said Empress Property Manager Roberta Goodman, and both had lived at the Empress for a year before their deaths in their rooms, Mr. Carson on April 6 at the age of 79, and Mr. Williams on April 23 at the age of 41. Their birthdays were within a day of each other — June 5 and June 6, respectively.

Goodman said the men were more acquaintances than pals, but their recent history on the streets and at the Empress, and various physical ailments, including diabetes, gave them some common ground.

Fifteen hotel residents and staff, and medical and social services providers who'd worked with the two men shared stories about them at a May 5 memorial.

"I remember being on the elevator with Louis and one of his sons, a College of San Mateo student," said Martha Stein, support services staff member for the hotel. "You could see how proud Louis was of him. The boy had a really strong handshake, and when I commented on it, he said, 'I learned it from my dad.'" Louis just beamed, she said.

"I'm going to miss Louis so much," said Pan Fisher, a friend and fellow resident. "He's always



Ted Carson



Louis Williams

going to be here with me, but I won't have him to talk to or argue with."

Goodman described how Mr. Williams' East Bay relatives — two sons, a twin sister, another sister, a brother and his mother — visited him often at the Empress to take care of him, and, after he died, came to take his personal effects.

"They went through his things and kept saying, 'I gave him that,' and 'I gave that to him — and he still had it!' It was touching," she said.

Mr. Williams was a sweet man, and one who didn't need much to be content, said a staff member. He'd asked her to help him set up a Netflix account. "He just wanted to sit in his room and enjoy a movie all the way through," she said.

Mr. Carson was a more demanding resident, but in a delightful, intelligent way. When DPH nurse Liane Angus brought him Eckstein and Sinatra CDs, he knew every word to every song, she said. "And we'd dance around the office — when he got excited, he just had to move."

His careful enunciation and gift for words were legend in the hotel. Angus did an imitation of him that had all the mourners at the memorial laughing: "I am most, most gratified, and you look quite wonderful today. Would you like to go to Paris or to Rome with me?"

Several people used less-than-complimentary words to describe Mr. Carson — ornery, grumpy, a hoarder who was kicked out of a hotel for that bad habit.

"Rarely he just made me crazy," said Mike McGinley, Curry Senior Center case management supervisor.

But mostly they recalled his wittiness and generosity. Years on the street had given him the taste for free food and the resourcefulness to get whatever he could find. He'd "do all the routes," an Empress resident said, and come back with lots of extra food, which he'd pass out to anyone who was hungry.

"I'm just so grateful that he didn't have to die on the street," said case manager Jackie Wilson. "He was here, among people who cared so much for him."

Aaron Jones II, an Empress desk clerk, read a poem he wrote, "The Memorial to Two, to Ted and Louis."

gone in their ages	dust
mostly Quiet	Not to be here
laying off	found silent
To the side	in the Rooms

leaving	of God
different	Calling
and like	them
the others	out

this memorial	in the preparation
is 4 2 with	of the times they
the chairs	must now
set up	spend

Both brothers	in His arms
Black men gone	at Home. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Peer Support Line

575-1400

Office of Self-Help

1095 Market St., Suite 202