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more than a decade in her work as a desk clerk and case manager at the hotel, said that Mr. Lane would get out into the neighborhood using his walker and wheelchair, taking cabs to where he needed to get, spend time lounging in the hotel's community room, or receive guests and fellow hotel residents in his second-floor room at the Hamlin after rebreaking his shoulder. He was hospitalized at Cal Pacific Medical Center on Feb. 17 and died there two days later.

John Franklin of the Community Housing Partnership said Mr. Lane was an Alabama University fan and that, as an Auburn fan himself, they enjoyed a lot of friendly banter over college football.

"As much as I'm sad about it, I kinda feel like he was ready," Roma Eisenstark said. "He seemed a lot more peaceful, accepting."

Others who knew him recalled a man who displayed plenty of spark. One hotel resident, Mary Mathews, said Mr. Lane was "always sending me to get Miller Genuine Draft."

He'd made a lot of friends at a Larkin Street bar. One of them, John, was in daily contact, either by phone or through frequent faxes. "Every morning on his fax machine, John would have sent a poem or something," Carlson said.

"He was a great guy," Durmas recalled. "He would have his moments and he would call, saying, 'Pearl, I need this done today. T-O-D-A-Y, today!' I still get laughter, joy from that. But he would always make that extra effort to let you know he was thankful and appreciative. He was a

wonderful tenant."

Durmas also took care to speak for Mr. Lane's custodian Sunny, who couldn't attend the memorial. "She is taking it really hard. She's really kind of torn up right now."

Mr. Lane is survived by a brother-in-law. He lost his sister about three years ago, Carlson said.

"He had a painful life," Blonsky said. "He could handle pain and he was really tough and he went through a lot of stuff. He's probably feeling the most peace he's felt most of his life." ■

— MARK HEDIN

SAUNDRA CASIMERE
Telephone operator

Head-strong Sandra Casimere pulled a "great escape" in her final months so she could be at home in the Alexander Residence with people who loved her.

The mother of two and former telephone operator got the news that she had terminal cancer in December when she was bedridden at S.F. General. She couldn't stand the thought of wasting away in the hospi-



Sandra Casimere with her granddaughter.

tal. So she plotted her escape with hotel social worker Betty Duran.

Duran told three dozen mourners at Ms. Casimere's memorial April 7 that she was concerned about liability issues if Ms. Casimere just left the hospital in her condition and came back to the Alexander. But Ms. Casimere assured Duran she would have a caregiver and her daughter to see her through to the end. So Duran had a wheelchair and a taxi waiting Dec. 23 for what she called Ms. Casimere's "great escape." But it was with her doctor's consent, of course.

Ms. Casimere received three months of attention from Billie Valbuena, her longtime caregiver, hospice folks and her daughter, Kelly Marie Noss, who lives at the Ambassador Hotel a block away and visited her every night. Ms. Casimere died March 27. She was 70.

"She was cantankerous, self-sufficient and stood her ground," said Rev. Michael Peterson, a resident who knew Ms. Casimere all 22 years she lived at the hotel. "And she was my dear friend."

"She could kick ass with the best of 'em," piped up a neighbor, drawing a ripple of laughter.

A dozen mourners, many longtime residents, told what a wonderful friend Ms. Casimere had been, sharing her experiences, listening to others and mixing in her good sense of humor. Valbuena said Ms. Casimere had become her best friend; they used to joke that they were so close it was like they were "married."

Peterson "glorified" Noss for her dedication to her mother.

Noss was seated in front with her brother, Vince, near a table holding

five bouquets and a cardboard panel on which were mounted photos of Ms. Casimere, some from her hippie days in the 1960s, others of her with her two grandchildren.

Rev. Glenda Hope, who conducted the memorial, said it was a tribute to Ms. Casimere and the residents that they are a strong community holding each other in high regard.

Ms. Casimere was born in Missouri, came to Sacramento as a little girl and at 21 arrived in San Francisco. She worked eight years as a Mark Hopkins Hotel operator in the 1970s. Her daughter said she was good at crafts, especially making sand castles at the beach. Ms. Casimere's older brother, Max Green, preceded her at the Alexander. He died there in the late 1980s.

The memorial opened with guitarist Gaudio Galicia accompanying the group's singing of "How Great Thou Art." At the end, the mourners sang "Amazing Grace" and a Filipino hymn, "We Will Never Forget You." The TNDC-owned Alexander treated everyone to cookies and snacks. ■

— TOM CARTER

DONALD HAND
Glide volunteer

The William Penn Hotel community room overflowed with 50 mourners who remembered Donald Hand, an exemplary man who extended his helping hand to everyone and was a longtime Glide Memorial United Methodist Church volunteer.

Mr. Hand, known as Donnie, devoted the last 15 years of his life to feeding and caring for the poor as a Glide vol-

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