

**LONNIE BOWLEN**  
**Reversal of fortune**

Lonnie Bowlen liked good food and good clothes and, with his job as a legal documents printer in the Financial District, he could afford them.

At age 16, when Mr. Bowlen left his Baytown, Texas, home for San Francisco, the city of his dreams, he was determined to make good. His O'Farrell Street apartment was the evidence — it had a fine stereo, tons of CDs, a handsome dining room set, candle holders, two chocolate Siamese cats, an abstract painting, and, near the windows, hanging crystals waiting for the right light to dazzle. Topping it off, Mr. Bowlen had a favorite visitor, the love of his life, his daughter Shalena from his seven-year marriage.

Mr. Bowlen's job fueled his middle-class lifestyle. He loved working, didn't miss a day in 20 years nor was he ever late, his daughter said before his Sept. 15 memorial at the Coronado Hotel where he had lived 14 months.

Shalena, with her mother, Pamela Stringer, had driven down for the service from Oregon, where they both live. She said as a teenager visits to her father were fun-filled with trips to Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39 and Macy's on Union Square. He bought her gifts and treated her to visits to beauty parlors. "He didn't wait for birthdays," she said. "He was just thoughtful and generous, regardless of what he had or didn't have."

She was wearing two handsome rings he had given her, unpolished dark stones in silver settings, perhaps, she suggested, reflecting a style from his one-quarter Cherokee lineage.

About three years ago, Mr. Bowlen was mugged after work in the

Financial District. He gave the robbers all his money but they beat him badly anyway. He was out of work for a couple of months. His employer refused to hire him back. Mr. Bowlen tried and tried — he didn't want charity, just his job, he said. But it was no go.

Then Mr. Bowlen couldn't make his rent. He became despondent and walked away from it all, leaving everything behind, his daughter said. He was on the street and homeless. One day he took a bad fall, fracturing his hip and shoulder. By then, he hadn't been in touch with his daughter for four years.

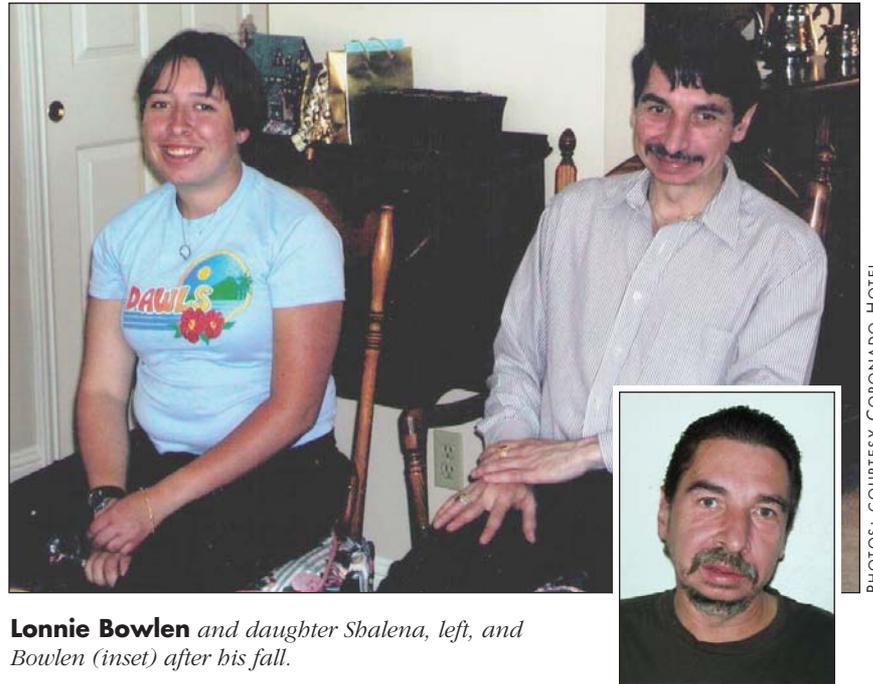
A social worker visited Mr. Bowlen in St. Francis hospital. The worker found Shalena on Facebook and wrote to her what had happened. The daughter contacted her grandmother, Ann Thoms, Mr. Bowlen's mother-in-law who divides her time between Novato and Tucson. Thoms said that after her daughter's divorce Mr. Bowlen didn't see Shalena for several years until she and her mother were living in Rohnert Park. Then Shalena reunited with her father in San Francisco and the visits began.

"She was the happiest part of his life," Thoms said.

After Mr. Bowlen's fall, Thoms was the only family member to visit him in the hospital. She said he asked her, "Do you think I'll ever get to work again?"

After Mr. Bowlen recovered, the worker got him into the Coronado, July 26, 2010. The hotel provides housing and support services to 65 formerly homeless people referred through the Human Services Agency.

On Sept. 8, 2011, Clarence Johnson, a case worker, found Mr. Bowlen dead on the floor of his hotel room. Cause of death wasn't known, but Mr. Bowlen



**Lonnie Bowlen** and daughter **Shalena**, left, and **Bowlen** (inset) after his fall.

PHOTOS: COURTESY CORONADO HOTEL

suffered from gastro-intestinal problems, staff said. He was 54.

At the memorial, his SRO friends among the 14 mourners said what a nice guy he was, always smiled and said hello. One man said to Shalena, "He really loved you." Carmel Dula, property manager, said, "He was truly a model tenant."

Three color photos of Mr. Bowlen in his apartment from a dozen years ago were framed on a table with a half-dozen candles. One shows him smiling under his bushy black mustache, sitting next to his happy teenage daughter.

Mr. Bowlen had problems as a child and as an adult, his mother-in-law and ex-wife said at the memorial, but they wanted them kept private.

"He had a very difficult life but he

was a very good person." Stringer said. "He was strong in many ways. He knew all kinds of people and got along with everyone. He didn't like it when people got treated wrong. But then, as the older Lonnie, he got quiet. I don't know where that turning point came."

Shalena Bowlen, now 27 and an elementary school teaching assistant in McMinnville, Ore., said afterward she hadn't had the means to visit her father and had not seen him in five years, but she had fond memories of her San Francisco visits.

"He had three windows in his apartment and hanging pieces of stained glass and crystals," she said. "At a certain time of day, the room was filled with rainbows." ■

— TOM CARTER

**City and County of San Francisco**  
**November 2011**

**VOTE November 8, 2011 Municipal Election**

Department of Elections  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 48  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 554-4375  
Fax: (415) 554-7344  
TTY: (415) 554-4386

Website: [www.sfelections.org](http://www.sfelections.org)

For questions about voter registration and vote-by-mail voting, (415) 554-4411  
For election results on Election Night, (415) 554-4375 or this website  
For information about polling places and ADA issues, (415) 554-4551

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In a major disaster, it might be several days before vital services are restored.  
Use the information on the 72 Hours website to be prepared.  
[www.72hours.org](http://www.72hours.org)

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Imagine you're warm and cozy this winter, and your energy bill doesn't break the bank. SFEnvironment is now offering up to \$11,000 for home energy upgrades. If your home is drafty and your energy bills are too high, contact one of our participating contractors to get a home assessment and find out how you can get up to \$11,000 to cover the cost of your upgrade. Visit [www.sfenvironment.org/sfhip](http://www.sfenvironment.org/sfhip) to find a participating contractor.

**Port of San Francisco**

As-needed Real Estate Economics and Planning Services RFQ: The Port is seeking to qualify a pool of as-needed consulting teams with expertise in the following five core areas: real estate economics, site and master planning, urban design and architecture, historic preservation, and transportation planning. Successful respondents must have experience working with ports, municipalities, or similar government agencies in specialized fields, and be familiar with San Francisco's waterfront and its regulatory environment, including local, regional, and state regulations affecting waterfront development. Please visit <http://www.sfport.com/index.aspx?page=18>, <http://sfgsa.org/index.aspx?page=359>, or contact Linda Battaglia at [Linda.battaglia@sfport.com](mailto:Linda.battaglia@sfport.com).

**WIC Can Help You**

The San Francisco Department of Public Health Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program offers benefits to low income pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, postpartum mothers and women with recent pregnancy terminations; infants and children under the age of 5 years. Benefits include nutrition, breastfeeding education and support, supplemental foods and referral services. WIC staff speaks English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Cambodian. For more information, please call (415) 575-5788. WIC is an equal opportunity provider.

**San Francisco Airport Commission**

The Airport Commission has commenced the RFP process for the Retail Development Program, Phase II Lease, for retail locations at San Francisco International Airport. The Informational Conference is 10:00 a.m., November 16, 2011, at SFO, International Terminal, Aviation Museum. Written comments and recommendations will be accepted until 12:00 p.m., 11/30/2011. Please see <http://www.flysfo.com/web/page/about/b2b/conces/> for additional information or call Mr. Tomasi Toki at (650) 821-4500.

**San Francisco Arts Commission**

On Tuesday, November 8 the public is encouraged to head down to U.N. Plaza where they can enjoy delicious bites courtesy of Off the Grid and shake a tail feather to live Haitian drumming and dance with the Afoutayi Dance Company. The free performances and dance lesson will take place from noon to 1:30 p.m. Audience participation is strongly encouraged! For more information visit: [sfartscommission.org/artery](http://sfartscommission.org/artery)

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- Join our Board Meetings (all meetings are open to the public),
- Join our Board of Directors (property owners, business owners, and residents), or
- Join our Committees (Public Rights of Way, District Identity & Streetscape Improvement, or Community Advisory Board)



For more information contact Dina Hilliard **415-292-4812** or [dinanomtlcbd@att.net](mailto:dinanomtlcbd@att.net)

All meeting and committee information is available on our website: [nom-tlcbd.org](http://nom-tlcbd.org)

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**tenderloin**  
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