

## OBITUARIES

Robinson said.

Friends and family gathered Feb. 16 for a memorial at the Raman Hotel in SoMa, his home since 2011. Lay priest Mira Ingram of Quest4Light invited the assembled to share their memories of Mr. Patton to mark his transition from this life.

Resident Mother Jones called Mr. Patton "My Honeybun. I'm glad that he's in no more pain. He was a very good person, always off looking for a place in the sun. He'd play jazz for me and talk about cooking. Jesus has a lot of reci-

pes in heaven, so I know John's happy," Jones said.

His son spoke of Mr. Patton's unending efforts on behalf of others. "Once we were on welfare. Things were tough. Dad would go to the bay and fish all day and half the night until there was enough for us and some of our neighbors who were hurting as much as we were. In summer, Dad would organize other drivers and he convinced Laidlaw to donate use of the buses and we'd caravan 10-12 of them across the city, picking up kids at the Point, Double Rock, in the Fillmore

and go out to the county fair in Pleasanton for the whole day. He'd give you his last dollar, if you needed it."

At one time the Patton home sheltered 14 rescued greyhounds. "Mom and Dad didn't worry when they left us home alone. The dogs wouldn't let us out and they wouldn't let anyone else in, either," Robinson said.

Mel Beetle, tenant organizer at the Raman, met Mr. Patton five years ago. "There wasn't a day since that passed we didn't greet each other and smile," Beetle said. "My own father loved to fish

the Atlantic Ocean. He'd bring home galvanized tubs full of flounder, most of which he gave to our neighbors. When I learned that John did the same thing out here, our bond was sealed forever. I know John's in heaven. He got to take the express lane in. I wonder how many people have already said to him, 'I loved that fish.'"

Mr. Patton is survived by his son, John, daughters Stephanie Robinson and April Patton, 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. ■

— Jonathan Newman

## Gentrification kills Tet Festival

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lation was "a big loss to the community. We need this festival," he said. "We should have something to showcase the community, especially Little Saigon. Every time we have the festival there's a big promotion to support and attract businesses."

Losing the festival this year, in the wake of the demise of the Vietnamese Community Center, which Nguyen said had organized the festival since 1996, was a surprise. "We didn't know about it," he said. "Otherwise we would work together, to see how we can help support them. But that's in the past already."

The Tenderloin was the beating heart of the Vietnamese refugee newcomers in the '70s and '80s, their first stop out of the old country into the new, a starring role the neighborhood no longer enjoys.

Le said that a couple of years ago, 4,000 to 5,000 Vietnamese Americans were living in the Tenderloin. The 2010 census counted 12,800 citywide, about 10% the size of San Jose's Vietnamese community. Le remembers organizing the neighborhood's first Tet Festivals in the early '90s, when they offered free tele-

phone lines for refugees to make calls to family and friends in Vietnam.

Over the years, festival guests included Leland Yee — from his time on the Board of Supervisors through his stint as state senator — and Mayors Willie Brown, Art Agnos, Frank Jordan and Gavin Newsom. There was "deep access to the political machine," Le said.

In lieu of the festival this year, VYDC and Vietnamese Family Services hosted a modest celebration on Feb. 20 from noon to 3 p.m. at 201 Turk St. that was open to the community.

There, Young presented Garden Grove Mayor Bao Nguyen as the festivities began. "I'm here to inspire you to rise up and fight for justice," he said. "And it's worth fighting for. Our parents and grandparents risked so much for us to be here. We're the survivors."

Tet is celebrated differently in San Jose, where it's held at the county fairgrounds and organizers charge \$10 admission, said Danny Nguyen, brother of Margaret Nguyen of Vietnamese Family Services. He arrived in the United States 37 years ago, at 14. There's also a free fes-

tival in San Jose's Vietnamtown, he said.

"I'm sad a little bit," he said at the Turk Street party. "I think they should have the festival, new year, for the children. We miss it. Somebody should organize it, for the children."

Mac-Quoc-Cot, speaking through an interpreter, said, "We celebrate here to make sure the kids don't forget, know which day is the New Year."

"Tet is for the kids to learn about their traditions," said Linh, another celebrant. "Without this, they will forget their culture."

"It's really about remembering the past, paying homage and bringing in prosperity and luck in the new year," Young said. "The festival is meant to highlight the values and culture of the community, a way to create visibility and embrace the community, making sure we're honoring and respecting elders, those who came before us."

When the speeches on Turk Street had finished, partygoers lined up for food. Twins Kayle and Kayla, both dressed in pink, adorably worked their way through slices of melon and plates of rice with chicken, seafood or pork. But the gathering really rocked when the games of chance came out.

Seniors and teens, with strips of raf-



MARK HEDIN

**Partygoers** crowd the table to play *Bau Cua* at the small gathering to celebrate the Tet lunar holiday.

file-type tickets in hand, crowded around two tables: One featured a game called Bai Cao, played with a deck of cards, the other, Bau Cua, a dice game. When it was time to go, Margaret Nguyen had her work cut out for her breaking things up. ■

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