

MARY DICKERSON
A poet when she spoke

Mary Dickerson's best friends may have been the chickens and pet rats that she kept in her room at the Ambassador Hotel, but she also was madly in love with fellow resident Cecil Baker's cat, Tommy, aka Sir Thomas.

"She wanted to take him, but I couldn't give him up," Baker told the small group assembled at the hotel for a Nov. 16 memorial to Ms. Dickerson, who had died the week before. She was 58.

Baker painted a poignant picture of a "tiny woman with a Judy Holliday voice, but softer and gentler."

Ms. Dickerson didn't want to be around people much and didn't talk much, he said.



"But when she did, she talked in poetry, reciting her haiku. She spent a lot of her time writing those haiku, though she never finished them — she said they were never perfect enough."

Baker, an Ambassador resident for 20 years, said Ms. Dickerson also had lived there a "long time," though he wasn't sure how long. The hotel's records only showed that she'd been there since 1999, when Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp. bought the SRO.

Resident Herbert Wilburn and Baker reminisced about how Ms. Dickerson had kept to herself.

"I was Mary's neighbor for a year," Wilburn said. "She came to some tenant meetings and we started talking. I like to think she came to trust me." Still, neither he nor Baker knew any facts about her life or family.

But they remembered her fondly. They wondered if management knew about her unconventional pets, and they chuckled about her eccentric clothing.

"She always, always wore those black pants, down to her knees," Baker recalled.

"Pedal pushers," added Wilburn, "that's what we used to call them."

— MARJORIE BEGGS

DANNY LOUTH
Jazz fan

Danny Louth, a retired car salesman and avid jazz buff, lived 19 years in the Alexander Residence with his bride, Remy Lazaro Louth. He was 76 when he died.

"We met at a senior center dance in the Mission," Remy Louth said at the Nov. 23 memorial on the mezzanine attended by 17. "It was love at first sight. He was of German heritage. I'm Filipina. We were married 20 years ago at South Lake Tahoe and stayed at Harrah's. We went to the Engelbert Humperdinck show."

The two went to concerts often thereafter, seeing such performers as Peggy Lee, Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Torme, Harry Belafonte and Johnny Mathis, with Mr. Louth always buying tickets well in advance.

The Louths' longtime friends at the Alexander, Sandra Casimere and Carol Giordano, remembered his sardonic wit. He was amused by the things that went on at the Alexander and what he saw as its characters, they said.

"He had such a great record collection," Giordano said, "the Modern Jazz Quartet, Wynton Marsalis, Dizzy Gillespie."

In recent years, kidney disease slowed Mr. Louth down and his spirits dimmed, other residents said, but he always showed appreciation for favors.

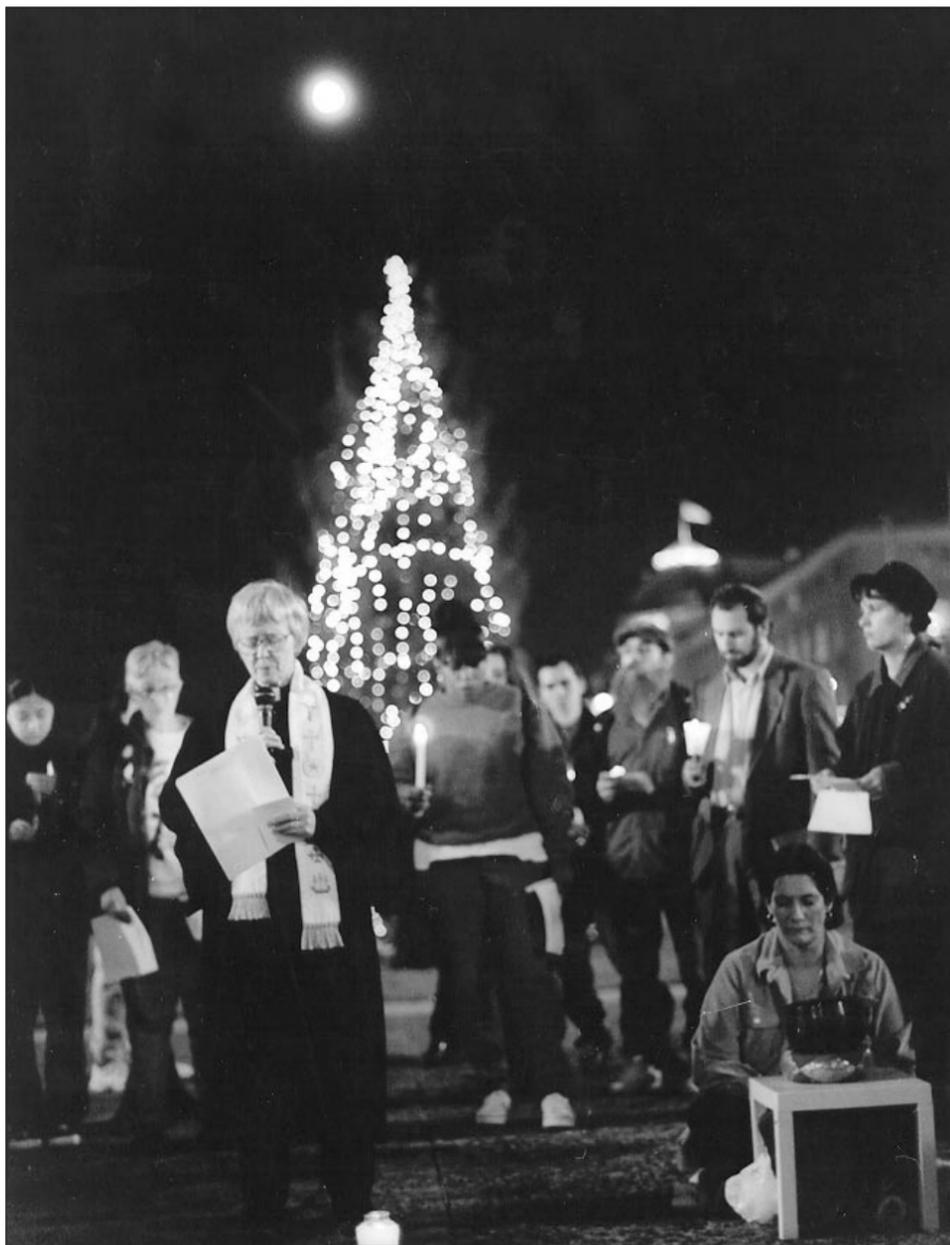
"He loved jazz," Mrs. Louth, 81, said. "He had Billie Holiday and Louis Armstrong records, too, about 600 albums total. I don't know what I'll do with them now."

Mr. Louth, a car salesman in San Francisco for 30 years, came originally from Los Angeles.

— TOM CARTER

RITA RESTO
'Lady with a lot of class'

"This is our time to remember Rita — a very religious person," Pastor Mark Ferrell told Rita Resto's friends, fellow tenants at the Iroquois Hotel and Seventh Day Adventist Church mem-



MEMORIAL FOR THOSE WHO DIED HOMELESS

FIFTEEN years ago, S.F. Network Ministries launched what has become an annual melancholy event: the Interfaith Memorial Service for All Our Homeless Dead. In 1989, the candlelight service honored 16 people who had died of hypothermia on San Francisco streets that year. By 2001, the deaths had rocketed to 183.

"We never know the numbers until right before the service," said the Ministries' executive director, the Rev. Glenda Hope, "but we do know that for 10 years, the number's been well over 100. It's getting harder and

harder to get the names of who died. The Health Department is resistant — it says it's concerned we're using the information for 'political purposes,' and it also tells us that since 9/11, all its resources are going into bioterrorism."

This year's memorial to the homeless who died in 2004 was held Dec. 21, just as The Extra was going to press. Hope and other clergy officiated at the service, which was co-sponsored by S.F. Network Ministries and the Coalition on Homelessness.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

bers who had come to mourn her. "We're going to try to do things today that would have made her happy."

The Dec. 1 memorial was held in the community room at the Iroquois, where Ms. Resto had lived for nine years. That may have been a record for her:



Moving around was more the norm. Born and raised in New York, she was in the military as a young woman and had been married to a military man. They spent many years in

Europe, including three years in Berlin. She moved to San Francisco in 1991.

"After she died, her son and I went to her room," said Michael Medema, the hotel's tenant services supervisor. "There was a picture of her in Germany in a fur coat — she looked like a movie star."

Almost everyone who shared memories of Ms. Resto commented on her stylishness.

"She was a lady with a lot of class who always dressed well and was a really good singer, too," said church member Marlena Dupas, who sang "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" at the memorial.

Ms. Resto's neighbor from across the hall called her "a sweetheart with a great sense of humor and beautiful clothes," and recalled how

she sometimes left her door open so her singing would waft into the hall.

"She was a classy lady, a class act — she wore well," added another neighbor.

Others recalled her generosity: invitations to come to her room for tea and crackers and to smoke cigarettes, and a gallon jar of bay leaves for a neighbor who cooked her a dinner of lasagna and cannoli, Milano style.

"I was her daughter-in-law for six years when I was married to her son, but we've stayed in touch," said Andrea Witt. "She was very creative and a woman of faith. I think I fell in love with her eyes, which were just like her son's. I know she'd been hurt in her life — she's better off now."

Medema, too, remembered how, despite Ms. Resto's perfect appearance, she'd sometimes lean over and say, "But I'm in pain inside."

This last Halloween, Medema said, he invited Ms. Resto to the hotel party and she surprised him by showing up. "She was dressed all in white and she whispered to me, 'I'm an angel from the North.' I think she's an angel in the North now. She'd probably hate this gathering — she'd wonder why we all weren't dressed better."

Ms. Resto was 59 when she died of a heart attack Nov. 12. She was buried in San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, a military cemetery.

— MARJORIE BEGGS