

Grant Building's 'live-in thief' back in court

Suspect nabbed driving stolen car with stolen goods

BY TOM CARTER

THE nocturnal live-in thief who so plagued the Grant Building three years ago that he was likened to a lingering virus was back in court on Feb. 17, again facing charges involving his old haunts.

Ronald Salkin, 42, was being held on \$75,000 bail since he was arrested for driving a hot car on Jan. 11. Stolen property from the Grant Building was discovered in the trunk. When the district attorney's office learned that Salkin had additional charges stemming from Grant Building thefts in January, the public defender and Judge Suzanne Ramos Bolanos agreed to combine them for a March 29 pretrial hearing.

In 2002, for a nightmarish stealing spree that victimized Grant Building offices over seven months, Salkin got pretrial diversion, an agreement orchestrated by the DA's

office. He agreed to pay \$1,000 in restitution to a mental health nonprofit in the Grant Building — the Office of Self Help — and to attend 12 counseling sessions at Glide. Released on \$387 bail, he promptly disappeared.

Left behind was one of the strangest pilfering stories in the city's history. Salkin's lengthy night-time

occupation of 1095 Market was a modus operandi perhaps never seen downtown. The spree began slowly in the summer of 2002. He entered the eight-story building with a front door key after dark when everyone had gone, then entertained himself in various offices on a number of floors, using pass keys, stealing as he went.

Over the weeks, petty cash disappeared, cell phones, then cameras, CDs, videos, a bicycle. Tenants thought the stuff had been misplaced, or the culprit was someone who worked in the building. But they didn't communicate with each other and for a while didn't know how widespread the losses were. Some of the thefts cut to the quick. Loss of an \$800 laptop to a nonprofit skimping by could threaten its solvency.

Salkin was slippery, too. If he ran into anyone in the building late, he had a glib, believable ruse, people who ran into him later said.

But alone, he'd find an inviting office, and dine on any food he found (and wine on a few occasions). Or he'd bring in bags of fast food, carelessly leaving a mess behind like a taunting spoor. He liked tuning in porn sites on computers, too, and making long distance calls. It took the San Francisco Study Center, publisher of The Extra and the building's oldest tenant, several months after Salkin's eventual arrest before it resolved the \$3,500

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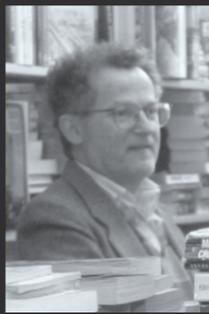
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YMCA, HASTINGS DOING DEAL

Y is ready to sell

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MCDONALD'S BOOKSTORE IS BACK

Looks like it never left

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A 1ST FOR TL HEALTH

Housing clinic No. 1 in nation

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Barbara Lange (left) and Gene Martin kick back at the Living Room in the Madonna Residence. Free breakfast for seniors, open all day.

CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

1,000 PEOPLE A DAY



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The homeless checking in at one of two TARC reception desks can pick up a couple of energy bars, grab some coffee, watch TV and chill out. A free telephone is in the back.

Walk right in

Neighborhood drop-in centers — what they offer

BY TOM CARTER

IT looked briefly in December as if the mayor's top priority, the war on homelessness, had developed a gaping hole in its front line. Hospitality House's Tenderloin Self-Help Center had been shot out of the water after 19 years. The city had chosen another nonprofit to embrace the neighborhood's homeless population with an expanded drop-in center. But, facing a \$97 million deficit,

the mayor also cut the \$850,000 that would fund the Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center expansion. Others who serve the homeless could pick up the slack, the city said.

In January, the mayor restored the Self-Help Center's funds through June, but put it under the Department of Human Services instead of Public Health, and honored TARC's contract, also under DHS. TARC's funding is for 18 months, through June 2006.

These two are the largest of the nine drop-in centers in and near the Tenderloin. Each center serves 20 to 400 walk-ins a day, a combined daily clientele of more than 1,000 people. All centers are prepared to aid most anyone who comes in, offering at least a place to rest and often coffee and conversation, respite and referrals, and at most food, medical care, counseling, free phone calls and job training.

TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

When TARC's 18-month city financing to expand as a drop-in center jelled earlier this year, things at the 183-187 Golden Gate facility changed fast. Operating since 1990 under various local and federal grants, TARC battled the spread of AIDS and to hold HIV in check, and last year its daily drop-in numbers peaked at 200. After the expansion, the one-stop center's clients swelled to 400 one day in February.

"The whole dynamic has changed," says Executive Director Tracy Brown. "It's the busiest we've ever been."

A significant innovation is clients signing up for shelter reservations through CHANGES, the city's computer system for homeless, and new to the TARC operation. It requires fingerprinting for identification, a demand TARC

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