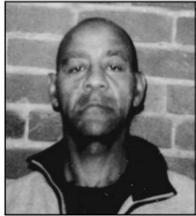


**CURTIS JONES – Vietnam veteran
LUCIANO MORENO – Flower vendor**

The friends of a Vietnam POW and a Mission Street flower vendor remembered both in memorials Feb. 17 at the Camelot Hotel. They came to the hotel within two months of each other and died two days apart.

Luciano Moreno was born in El Salvador and died of cancer on Feb. 8 at age 45. Curtis Jones, the POW, died of AIDS on Feb. 6. He was 55. Both were in failing health when they moved into the Camelot last fall; they went to the hospital and didn't come back.

Mr. Moreno was cheerful and energetic. He loved tacos and mole, especially during Cinco de Mayo festivities, one friend said. Mr. Moreno's social worker, Lauren Wichterman, said as a strolling flower vendor he worked the Mission and S.F. General Hospital. He lived in an apartment building basement and was fighting cancer before moving to the Camelot, she said. Chemotherapy treatments debilitated him, she said, and he confronted his mortality.



Curtis Jones

"When he got sick he talked to me about dying; he was afraid of it," said Wichterman. "It touched me deeply." But Mr. Moreno came to realize "how much love was around him," she said, and it was a comfort when he went into the hospital. He died six days later.

Just as the service was concluding, Sandra Green arrived. She wore a bright red dress and carried a sheaf of drawings. She said she was Mr. Jones' common-law wife of six years. They had met when she was homeless. She was distraught.

Green said Mr. Jones had suffered as an Army POW. His thumbs were broken "20 times," and his shoulders were fractured when he was "stuffed into a barrel," she said. Lingering pain dogged him after the war. He screamed at night, she said, and turned to smoking crack.

They separated after he was diagnosed with HIV because he didn't want to give her AIDS, she said. He wouldn't take his medicine and then stopped eating, she said. She lived at the Columbia Hotel five blocks away yet didn't know that his worsening condition had landed him in the VA Hospital until three days before he died.

When she went to see him, she said, he told her how much he loved her.

As mourners left, it was cold and drizzling outside. Green dabbed her eyes and opened the sheaf. There were scores of her chalk drawings on 8 by 11 paper of Mr. Jones, the love of her life, in the nude. "Most are x-rated," she said.

"I bought this dress for him but he never saw me wear it. I didn't know where he was. Now, they won't let me in his room. But if I could just have something of his, anything, his pillow, anything with his smell on it."



Luciano Moreno

— TOM CARTER

**RONNIE EAGLES
Voice for the homeless**

Even without teeth, Ronnie Eagles, a former Coalition on Homelessness staffer, could belt out speeches to pierce the heart and inspire the homeless to believe that a better day was possible.

Stretching his pencil-thin, 5-foot-4 frame to full stature, he delivered his inventive punch line — "We want solutions, not persecutions!" — at rallies and press conferences, and zinged it as well at Police Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings.

"Yes, for a while he even did it without his front teeth — the uppers," fellow coalition work Mara Raider said with a faint smile following a memorial for Mr. Eagles on Dec. 20 at the Senator Hotel.

Mr. Eagles, a resident since 1993, died unexpectedly of natural causes in his fifth floor room on Dec. 9. He was 44. For many years he had worked for the Community Housing Partnership maintenance crew servicing the Senator, Iroquois and San Cristina SROs. But he also was a cheerful volunteer.

Several among the 13 mourners spoke of his infectious personality and his skill at cooking soul food. Just two weeks before he died, he appeared healthy as he helped serve Thanksgiving dinner at the hotel "with joy in his heart," according to Manager Isabella Marshall.

"He was well-known and loved," she told the gathering. Likely more of his hotel friends would have attended but Mr. Eagles' family in Oakland, where he was raised, had held a service there the Friday before.

A man stood up and said Mr. Eagles "had passion and was inspiring. He taught me a lot about overcoming things to effect change."

Tenant Services Manager Rae Suber sang "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" in "15 keys," she said. "And he would've told me that. But that song makes me think of Ronnie."

Mr. Eagles was a Street Sheet vendor when he discovered the coalition's civil rights project and plunged into it in the mid-90s, according to his co-worker Raider. He came to the Turk Street office daily, became paid staff and soon showed his skill as a public speaker who moved people.

"He was very experienced and passionate and invaluable for me," Raider said. "He trained dozens of people to document civil rights violations."

After 1999, Mr. Eagles' participation dropped off, Raider guesses because of burnout. He infrequently came in to volunteer.

"But the way he talked — 'We need to be down there!' — it got me and others going," Raider said.

"Yes," another mourner added, "he was all about the do."



Ronnie Eagles

— TOM CARTER

**JOHN TAYLOR
AA volunteer**

When paramedics carried John Taylor on a gurney into the Senator Hotel on May 21, 2003, shortly after 7 p.m., he was screaming and crying in pain. The shocked manager told them he couldn't be left like that.

"I didn't want him unattended," recalled the hotel's Isabella Marshall. "I thought he wouldn't make it through the night. But he told me he'd be okay and that he didn't want to go back to the hospital."

Mr. Taylor got help that night and with round-the-clock caregivers recovered in a month from an excruciating foot amputation brought on by diabetes. Although never pain-free, Mr. Taylor soon ventured into the world from his seventh floor room driving the motorized wheelchair he was given. Friends say the 5-foot-8, 230-pound man helped as a volunteer at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and became a congenial tenant who never complained, despite his suffering.

But Mr. Taylor's medical complications twice sent him to St. Francis hospital over three days in December. The last time, the 19th, he died there. He was 50.

On Dec. 29, 11 of his friends attended his memorial at the Senator.

"He kept his door open all the time with his wheelchair," said one man. "Even in pain he was willing to try to help people if they needed it."

"I knew him 30 years," said Angel Ichord. "I got clean first and then he followed. But he helped people out even when he was on drugs. I'm sorry he's gone but I'm glad he doesn't have to suffer anymore."

Ichord said she first met Mr. Taylor in the New Orleans French Quarter in the mid-1970s when he was Tina, a cocktail waitress in a drag bar. They met up frequently afterward in cities and towns across the nation as they followed "the same circuit."

"He was clean four years and then diabetes took his foot two years ago," Ichord said. "But he refused to get depressed. I'll miss him."

— TOM CARTER

**MARLA COOMES
Full of life, spark**

Marla Coomes had flash. You could see it in the pictures assembled for her Jan. 23 memorial at the Camelot Hotel, and the mourners confirmed it.

"She was always full of spunk, full of life, with lots of spark," said Shannon Hugon, the hotel's support services manager. "Happy, she was very happy; unhappy, she was very unhappy."

"She definitely was one who blew hot and cold," said John Miller, Ms. Coomes' Camelot neighbor and friend. "Once, she invited me over, offered me a cigarette and told me the doctor said she had six months to live. I told her, 'Take care of yourself and prove the doctors wrong.'"

"She went from being able to explain her condition to me calmly, then breaking down in tears. At the door, she said, 'I love you, too. Now goddamn it, stay away from me.' And blam — she slammed the door on me."

Hotel staff recalled that Ms. Coomes was "joyful, her own woman," when she arrived at the Camelot 18 months ago after living on the streets, and she was delighted to finally have housing. She made many friends, inside and out, even though her health was deteriorating.

Ms. Coomes was in and out of St. Francis Hospital for several months, and died there Jan. 12, said Hugon, of "medical complications." She was 59.

Miller said Ms. Coomes talked to him about her sister and father in Pennsylvania, her days as a club dancer in San Francisco, and her husband, a veteran, who died of a heart attack three years ago. But he knew few details.



PHOTO COURTESY LYON-MARTIN WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Marla Coomes

— MARJORIE BEGGS



TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

Outreach and Community Events March 2006

HIV Services Forum
Topic: Speed and HIV
Speaker: Kevin Mosley and Kathleen Ritchie
Date/Time: Wednesday, March 15, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Health Promotion Forum
Topic: Safe Syringe Disposal
Speaker: Jennifer Awa
Date/Time: Wednesday, March 22, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Location for Forums: TARC, 191 Golden Gate Ave.;
light meal will be provided

Client Advisory Panel CAP
Come talk with Alexander Fields, Consumer Board Representative; Tracy Brown, TARC's Executive Director and program managers about plans for TARC.
Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.
Date/Time: Wednesday, March 8, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm;
Wednesday, March 29, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Volunteer for TARC
Orientation: Sunday, March 12, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (lunch provided);
Sunday, March 26, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (lunch provided)
183 Golden Gate Ave.
You must pre-register for volunteer trainings. Stop in or call David at (415) 934-1792.

**For the current groups' schedule or more information,
call 415.432.7476 or go to www.tarc.org**



TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

health promotion • social services • HIV housing
For more information visit www.tarc.org