

**ROBERT BRUCE BROOKS**  
MAP dispatcher

Robert Bruce Brooks, stern and unsmiling, was the smart, dependable dispatcher dedicated to sending Mobile Assistance Patrol vans out in the dead of night to rescue drunks, addicts and anyone unfortunate enough to be incapacitated.

Mr. Brooks was 20 years in recovery himself. He knew that helping people in need gave them another chance to recover and perhaps find a better life. The ubiquitous MAP vans, a program of Community Awareness and Treatment Services, help with homeless outreach, scraping people off the streets and taking them to facilities where services are available. During his eight years with MAP, he worked the graveyard shift.

Mr. Brooks died May 20 at the Western Addition home of his significant other, Martha Johnson, where he lived since moving from a Turk Street SRO. He had suffered heart problems for several years. He was 60.

On June 7, a day after his funeral, a dozen friends and co-workers gathered at a memorial for him at CATS' 39 Fell St. offices in a second-floor conference room above where he had worked. They remembered him as a dependable worker, even self-sacrificing, but sometimes cantankerous and opinionated. Two women said they admired his ability to show up and do his job but his "his-way" attitude had alienated them.

Max Haptonstahl, MAP program director, said Mr. Brooks "was a seminal figure in establishing our 24-hour dispatch" and in maintaining a high standard for the city. Mr. Brooks handled the graveyard shift's calls — usually from six to 15 of MAP's total 125 daily calls — while monitoring and transmitting radio calls to the vans. Haptonstahl later explained that, although the graveyard shift has fewer calls than other shifts, the night-time calls are more critical "as far as preventing homeless deaths." Early morning is when people on the street are "most vulnerable," he said.

MAP driver Jack Harris Jr., who worked under Mr. Brooks for two years, said he thought he was "odd" at first but got used to his personality. As soon as



Robert Brooks, left, with his idol Smokey Robinson.

Harris got to work, Mr. Brooks started talking to him, always emphasizing a professional attitude.

"He said no matter what kind of situation I got into out there to use my better judgment and deal with it — not call him — and get the result to him and he'd back me 100 percent," Harris said. He paused. "And when I walked through that door he could tell at a glance when I wasn't feeling good, and we'd do a process on it. It's hard to accept he's not here."

Born in Philadelphia, Mr. Brooks went into the Army after high school, serving in Vietnam and Taiwan in the mid-1960s. According to obituary notes on a table holding two bouquets and a display of 10 large color photos, he bounced around Los Angeles after the service until resuming his education. He was graduated from Los Angeles Technical Trade School in 1980, then moved to San Francisco and got a job with Multi-Services Center North. He received a BA degree from San Francisco State in 1989 at age 43. In 1998, he joined MAP.

"Robert was most proud of the fact that he was clean and sober over 20 years," the notes said. "His sobriety allowed friends to see the real Robert."

He was known as an avid reader and a computer buff and was considered quite knowledgeable. He

impressed people with his "encyclopedic" recall of old films and popular music — admiring Smokey Robinson above all singers — and appreciating people who contributed to the African American culture.

One of two framed pictures showed Robinson with his arm around Mr. Brooks' shoulders.

"Robinson was in a grocery store somewhere in town," said Haptonstahl, "and someone pointed at Robert and said, 'That's your biggest fan.' So Smokey walked over to Robert

and somebody took their picture."

But Haptonstahl said there was a side of Mr. Brooks few knew. He was surprised, after eight years of knowing him, to see among the several pictures of Mr. Brooks with his companion and her two daughters that he was smiling. "I just learned, too, that he taught the daughters how to swim," Haptonstahl said.

Mr. Brooks was buried in the 500-acre National Veterans Cemetery in Sacramento.

—TOM CARTER

**DAWN MILLS**  
Family caregiver

The unexpected death of 27-year-old Dawn Mills had come as a shock to the small group of mourners who gathered at the Ambassador Hotel on June 11 to pay their respects.

Ms. Mills, the caregiver of her mother, Genevieve Mills, who lives at the 55 Mason St. hotel, died on Memorial Day four days before she was to be married, and in the presence of her mother. Her mother said that "she was injected with battery acid." On the street that means she got a "hot shot," an injection of poisoned dope.

"She was murdered!" said Ms. Mills' fiancé, Abdul Azim Diab. "And I know who did it."

A spokesman for Southern Police Station declined to comment on the case or even confirm that it was under investigation.

"Her death hit me so bad I punched holes in the hospital wall. I had to be restrained," said Diab, a thin man, 69, who looks much younger.

A spokesman for the medical examiner's office said the cause of Ms. Mills' death had yet to be determined pending the toxicology report.

Ms. Mills, who was born prematurely Dec. 7, 1979, at San Francisco General Hospital, was a resident of the Camelot Hotel on Turk Street, said her mother. She weighed 1 pound when she was born, her mother said.

"She was a good sister," said her brother, Kenneth Nutter. "Any time she needed help I was there for her."

"She was always helping somebody," said her mother, who uses a wheelchair and respirator. "She took very good care of me. She loved to draw and paint."

"She was an artist," Diab said. "She loved to draw angels."

"Grief comes because we love and we care," said the Rev. Glenda Hope, who presided over the memorial.

"She had a great personality, a great spirit," said one mourner.

Diab said he and Ms. Mills were to be married June 1. "She was a ball of fire," he said. "She'd tell me things and I'd do it right away."

Ms. Mills is survived by an 8-year-old son, three sisters and a brother.

"I lost my best friend, but those things come and go," said Diab. "But she's still here."

—JOHN GOINS



**TENDERLOIN HEALTH**  
a continuum of care

**Outreach and Community Events July 2007**

**Health Promotion Forum**

**Topic:** Harm Reduction and Substance Use

**Speaker:** Anna Berg, ASW, Harm Reduction Therapy Center & Steve Harlow, MFT, New Leaf

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, July 17, 12 pm - 1:30 pm

**HIV Treatment Forum**

**Topic:** Knowing Your Numbers, Part II

**Speaker:** Nina Grossman, Tibotec Pharmaceuticals

**Date/Time:** Monday, July 16, 3 pm - 4 pm

**Client Advisory Panel**

Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Board Client Representative(s) and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health.

Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, July 11, 11:30 am - 1 pm;  
Wednesday, July 25, 11:30 am - 1 pm

**Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health**

**Orientation:** Sunday, July 15, 12 pm - 6:30 pm

220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor  
lunch provided

You must register for volunteer trainings.  
Stop in/call Emilie (415) 934-1792.

For a schedule of current groups or for more information  
call 415.431.7476 or go to [www.tenderloinhealth.org](http://www.tenderloinhealth.org).



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