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giver of 2½ years, Ming, who speaks little English. At night, Kevin Thomas, her next door neighbor on the sixth floor, looked out for her.

A memorial for Mrs. Tao was held at the apartment building Jan. 7. More than a dozen of her friends attended. Some went up to a table to view an undated framed color photo of her and bowed in the Chinese tradition. In conducting TL memorials



Chui Y. Tao

for several decades, the Rev. Glenda Hope said afterward she couldn't recall anyone as old. "I think it was a first," she said.

"Mrs. Tao had the most beautiful smile," said building manager Patsy Gardner. "You could just feel the warmth. She came down to coffee every day and, no matter how she felt, she sent

out good feelings for her fellow man. She kept a red paper cross on her door."

Her friends told how sweet she was, how she smiled and "talked nice." She read the Bible every day, they said, and prayed for everyone. Ming took her on Sundays to a Lutheran church at Anza and Ninth Avenue and to her family doctor in Chinatown and to the bank.

But for two hours every day, Cheung said, she was glued to Chinese soap operas on the TV in her apartment.

Mrs. Tao left China in 1985 to live with her son in Texas. Then she moved to London and lived with her daughter for 10 years. She came to live by herself in the Aspen Apartments in 1997 and was still there when TNDC bought the building a year ago. Her daughter now lives in town on Harrison Street.

"She was good people," said one man. "She was good to everyone. I'm glad she didn't suffer."

At the end, the Chinese women hugged Ming and each other and cried softly. Then the mourners had the hot tea and cranberry bread that Gardner set on a table.

-TOM CARTER

BERNARD DEFOE

A jokester and stylish to the end

The impeccably dressed Bernard DeFoe had troubles enough with debilitating kidney dialysis treatments three times a week. But, returning from the hospital one day in October, he fumbled with his apartment building key, fell and broke his hip.

The accident put him in a wheelchair and one step from the grave.

"I used to push him up the ramp here," said one mourner at Mr. DeFoe's memorial Dec. 19 in the lobby of the old Aspen Apartments, where a dozen friends gathered. "He was in a lot of pain but remained upbeat."

TNDC's apartment manager Patsy Gardner found Mr. DeFoe dead in his room on Dec. 10 during a room check. He was 57.

The building at 165 Turk St. is TNDC-owned and, with another building two blocks away, is called Turk-Eddy Preservation.

His friends said the affable Mr. DeFoe loved to joke and would fib a bit to see if people could catch on.

"He was hard to read sometimes and would throw you off to the left," said one man. "I knew him a long time. He used to run a little newsstand at Taylor and Eddy. He was a good guy. Everybody knew him."



Bernard DeFoe

"He was the kindest man I every met in my life," piped up another.

The memorial was momentarily interrupted when an ambulance arrived to take an elderly woman to the hospital. The Rev. Glenda Hope, who was officiating, paused and said a prayer for her.

Mr. DeFoe was from the Bronx where his mother and sister live. He came to San Francisco 25 years ago. He moved into the Aspen in 2003 and became a tenant activist

He worked part-time at Pete's grocery at 289 Eddy St. across from Boddeker Park, now called Downtown Grocery, for about eight years. His nine-year battle with kidney disease forced him to slow down, but not melt down.

"He was an immaculate dresser and very cordial," said one woman. "It's not every day you meet somebody like that. He had nice clothes, color coordinated, tidy and neat. He was from New York — that's where we get our classy men from."

Kelvin Nance, Mr. DeFoe's support service worker for 10 years, said he and his wife invited Mr. DeFoe for holiday dinners at their South San Francisco home and that he often brought presents to Nance's granddaughter.

"We were his only family," Nance said. "He liked to think he was like my father — I just let it go. I miss him already." ■

-TOM CARTER

JOSEPH BRUCE JENSEN Vietnam vet

Lively, funny, good-hearted but desperately ill is how fellow residents and staff at the Empress Hotel remembered Joe Jensen at his Dec. 19 memorial.

"He lived here for three years and, in that short time, he helped build our community," said hotel Property Manager Roberta Goodman.

Mr. Jensen, who'd had both a heart attack and stroke recently, died in the hospital Dec. 9 of complications from cardiac disease and diabetes. He was 63.

"He was my neighbor," said one man. "He kept me laughing — he made everyone laugh."

A staff member recalled that if she asked how he was feeling, he'd tell her what was wrong, "but in the next breath, he'd crack me up."

Resident Ron Rucker said that Mr. Jensen was a Vietnam vet, though he didn't know his military branch or other details of his life.

"I was an Army medical corpsman in Vietnam, so I let him know I was a fellow vet and that I might be able to help him," Rucker said. "Joe surely had lots of problems. Many of us have come down to this" — he swept his arm around the room — "but we need to support each other."

A former hotel tenant representative echoed Rucker: Mr. Jensen was not the kind of person who reaches out to get help, he said, "but we need to know how we're all doing."

Another man also identified himself as a vet. He rarely attended memorials, he said, and he had few "warm relationships," but he did with Mr. Jensen. "I'm going to miss him a lot."

-MARJORIE BEGGS

GERALD HENRY "The King"

Everyone who knew Gerald Henry called him "The King," and he called himself that, too, according to James Weyland, his good friend and fellow resident at Franciscan Towers.

"He always wore a crown — a real one — and he had several different crowns," said Weyland, who met Mr. Henry four years ago.

"He's the one who encouraged me to go to church. We attended Hamilton Memorial (Church of God in Christ). And I was the one who gave him his medication, put on his oxygen mask at night, took him to the hospital and took care of his cat," Weyland said.

Mr. Henry, who was born in Detroit, lived at the Seneca Hotel before moving to the Franciscan two years ago. He died in his room Dec. 2, probably of a heart attack, said Liz Delgadillo, Franciscan social worker. He was 64.

At the Dec. 19 memorial for Mr. Henry, Delgadillo remembered him as a man who lived the way he wanted, despite disabilities that confined him to a wheelchair.

"He was always strong, even with going in and out of the hospital a lot," she said. "He really was the king of his castle — though I was always reminding him to keep his cat, Tinker, in his room."

Thomas Heintz Jr., a Franciscan Towers resident for 23 years, said he conversed often with Mr. Henry, who "talked a lot and really fast — almost like he was talking in tongues."

Another resident at the small gathering, Sharon Ray, said she didn't know Mr. Henry well but felt she had to come to his memorial: She happened to "see the coroner" taking his shrouded body down in the elevator and only learned later that it was "The King" who had passed.

-MARJORIE BEGGS

KATHY FIELD "Only one Kathy"

Purple mums in pots, glowing candles and a copy of a poem that began, "Light a candle for those we mourn..." graced the table at the Hamlin Hotel in memory of Kathy Field, who'd lived at the hotel for almost eight years after being homeless for nine.

She died Jan. 7 in her Room 505 — a month shy of her 60th birthday.

Eighteen people came to remember a woman they admired but who, they admitted, often drove them nuts with her honesty and abandon.

"You just had to love her, even though she shocked you," Donald Thomas, an eight-year resident of the Hamlin, said at the Jan. 15 memorial. "She had an incredible passion for all creatures. There was even a rumor that she was feeding milk to the hotel mice. There was only one Kathy, and I'm going to miss her."

Loretta Ball lived on the sixth floor, right above Ms. Field, and they became fast friends. "We had good times and bad times, like all friends," Ball said. "Often we'd bang on our floor and ceiling to communicate — bang, bang, bang with a broom to say good night."

By the time a few more people had shared memories of Ms. Field, many in the room were in tears

Vanessa Brown, a former case worker, called Ms. Field "a bright light, a warm, caring soul."

A man called Dr. Joe said he was her special friend: "When I was ill, messing myself, she brought me clean clothes and took care of me 24/7."

Resident Ma Anand Rekha remembered how Ms. Field would hang things to dry on the back fence. "Then she'd bring them to me, smelling of fresh air. I just wish she'd taken care of herself. I wanted her to heal, and maybe I was mean to her toward the end, but she was getting worse and worse."

Tenant Services Supervisor Kathleen Flanagan said it was she who found Ms. Field dead, the latest of seven bodies she's found since working in SROs.

The cause, she said, was "uncertain."

Flanagan took the opportunity to ask residents to also remember Willy Miles, a Hamlin tenant of several years, who died Thanksgiving day in a nursing home at age 74.

-MARJORIE BEGGS

TIMOTHY TOOHEY

Homeless, he died in a shelter

A memorial was held for a homeless man that people at the Episcopal Sanctuary, where he was sleeping, hardly knew.

Timothy Toohey died Jan. 4 of unknown causes in bed on the men's second floor. He was 47. His memorial was three days later.

"I didn't know him, but this was Mr. Toohey's second visit here," shelter Director Linzie Coleman said in the small chapel on the main floor where the women's beds were already turned down for the night. About a half dozen people attended the service, giving "the final dignity to one who died," said the Rev. Glenda Hope, who conducted.

On a beat up piano behind her was a small nativity scene that she couldn't help but notice had been adorned with two small bars of motel soap that clients are given.

"This touches me," she said. "Jesus was homeless, too."

One man stood and said he didn't know Mr. Toohey either but that he seemed like "a nice easygoing person" when he had passed him on the floor. Later in the evening he saw across the room that Mr. Toohey had his shirt pulled up over his head and appeared to not be breathing.

"My greatest comfort is that he didn't die on the street but here among people who cared for his well-being," said Coleman.

Episcopal Sanctuary, begun in 1983, is an emergency shelter on Howard and Eighth streets that serves 200 adults who stay up to six months.

"It's important that we care for each other and gather and say his name," said Phil Clark, a member of the Grief Response Team the shelter started a year ago. "It's changing the way we approach death," he said. "We work with a medically frail clientele."

-TOM CARTER