

# Y may be in limbo, but members remember an Eden

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next to the Hastings Law School garage on Golden Gate Avenue at Larkin Street.

"We're devastated," said one employee inside at a sign-in station who asked that her name not be used.

The basement's splendid, period-tiled pool was closed — maybe forever — along with everything above the third floor, which included the popular, well-used big and small fifth-floor gyms. Basketball and soccer programs were history.

In the big picture, leaving the old building with its ancient plumbing and retrofit needs exemplifies the YMCA's evolution. It used to be spelled out Young Men's Christian Association but has shed its religious emphasis, along with its cheap-hoteler role, to tout fitness. When it originated in England in 1844, the YMCA championed high moral standards and physical strength.

June 30, a promotional YMCA pamphlet from 1918 lay on a table on the second floor with other artifacts and a guest book. "THE NEED of the world today," the first page began. "Men are Needed. Men of Brain — Men

of Muscle — Men of Character. Men with their best brought out. Real Men."

The main reason for Y's building and offering low-cost rental rooms — free if the need was great — was to accommodate servicemen in the two world wars. But it was cheap, respectable housing for anyone new to the city. Malcolm X stayed at the Central Y, and so did Willie Brown when he first arrived in the city.

John Hershey says the Y is in his "DNA." His father belonged to a Y in Pennsylvania, playing on its basketball, volleyball and swimming teams. He gave his son a preteen membership and taught him to swim in the Pottstown pool, a lot like the Central Y pool, Hershey recalled in an interview after the party.

He was one of a few longtime members attending whose name was up on a chalkboard along with 35-year members Tom Coffey and Wayne Piercy. But none matched the longevity of Tommy Travis, 94, who joined in 1937 and posed for pictures with Y Executive Director Carmela Gold.

Travis' grandfather gave him a Y membership in Birmingham, Ala., when he was 14. He came to San Francisco in 1937, barefoot, with

\$11 in his pocket. He joined the Central Y for \$30 a year. He remembers boxing and wrestling rings in the basement and Bob Hope's "nice show" in the late 1930s on the fifth floor for a weightlifting contest. Travis became a gymnast, proficient on parallel bars, later turning to weightlifting. He still lifts three times a week. "The Y was my life."

Travis had stopped coming that June 30 week because the barbells and dumbbells were inaccessible on the fifth floor.

"The Y has the best free weights of any Y in town," he said in an interview three weeks later. "The others have machines. You just sit on your butt. It's easy to work out. With free weights, though, you have to use balance."

Hershey joined the Y in 1976, preferring its friendly staff, community atmosphere and age and ethnic diversity to the trendy gyms of the time. The Y became an essential part of his life, a home, really. He became a devotee of the pool and Nautilus machines, an ardent student of aerobics and spin classes. He benefited from a personal trainer's advice, as well.

When aerobics' popularity soared in the mid-80s, Hershey says, the Y had many instructors on hand daily. His class, Robert

Scott's "Killer Aerobics," became so crowded it had to be moved to the gym and Scott "became the rock star of aerobics at the Y."

But it was the spin classes that changed Hershey's life.

"Through spin classes I was able to strengthen my road cycling skills and, at age 60 in 2006, I signed up for AIDS/LifeCycle," he told The Extra. "I was able to cycle the entire weeklong route from San Francisco to L.A. — 545 miles to raise money for the AIDS Foundation. This year I completed my fourth (ride)."

"I attribute my cycling confidence and hill climbing skills in large part to the YMCA Spin Classes, which I was still taking when the Y closed its doors."

"The memories of 33 years at the Y are very special. And at the ripe age of 64, I am somewhat fit and an avid long distance cyclist, thanks to the YMCA. But I'm still in shock. I'll be getting into swimming at the Embarcadero Y, but it's always crowded."

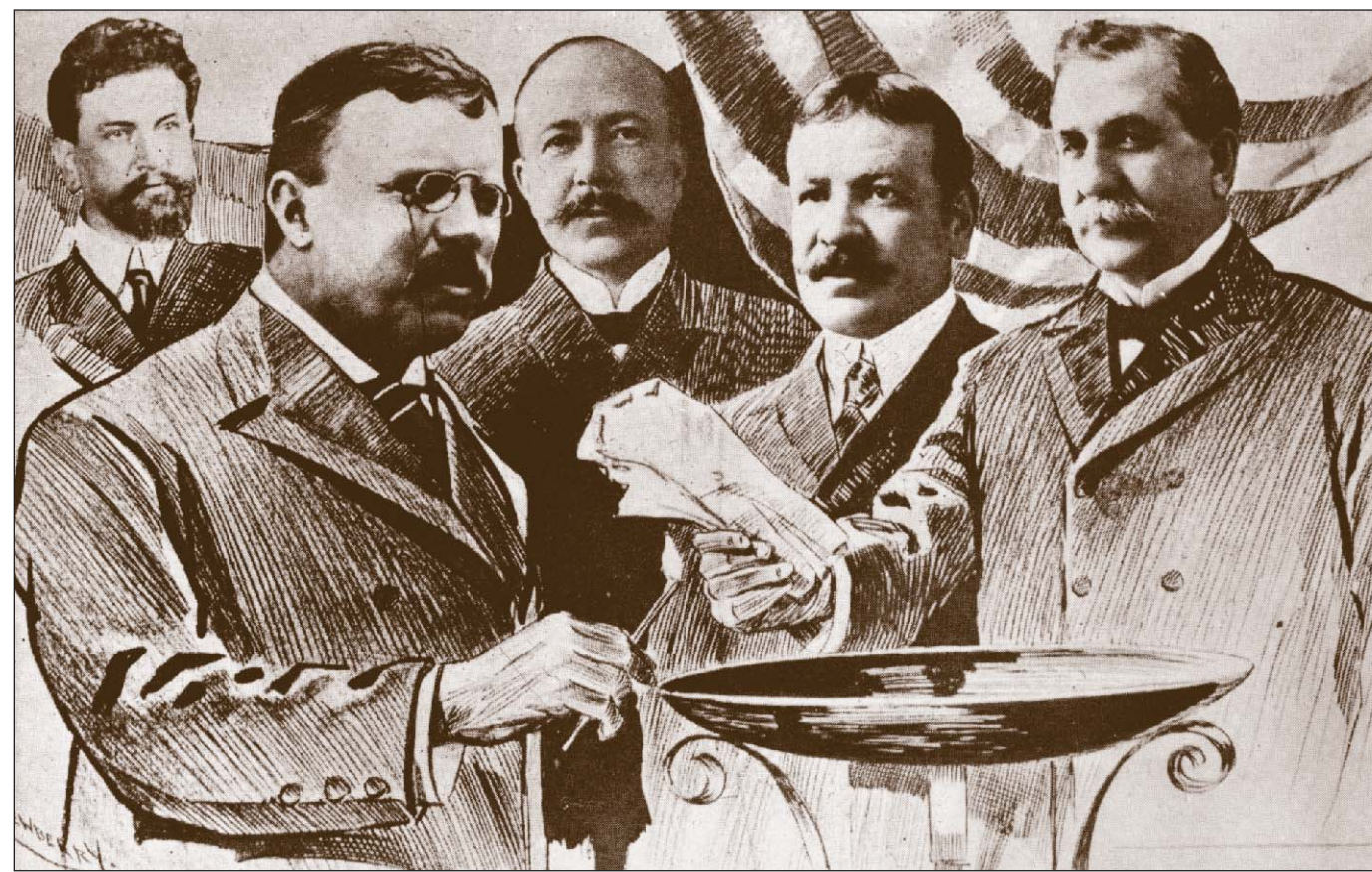
The Y apparently will put its operations in Hastings garage retail space. (See story on page 2.) Groundbreaking also hasn't started on its planned green-building center in the next block of Golden Gate Avenue on the vacant lot next to the Hastings Law College garage at Larkin Street. There's no target date, and construction will take about four years.

The planned fitness center would be 45,000 square feet and cost \$33 million, though the figures these days are slippery, according to Lauren Weston, the Y's director of development, a 17-year member who learned to swim at the Central Y as a child. It will have a gym, swimming pool and space for programs and community events.

Hastings Chief Financial Officer David Seward said that if the Y has, say, a \$5 million gap in its financing, the school can step in with assistance. The tradeoff would be free membership for the school.

"We could build the shell and leave the inside for them to develop," Seward said. "We'd want access for faculty, staff and students. A world-class athletic facility would be a campus enhancement."

Only a few programs remain at the Y's first two floors, where youths and seniors come for lunch and evening meal cooking classes, com-



COURTESY OF CENTRAL YMCA

**U.S. presidents loved the Y.** Here, in 1903, President Teddy Roosevelt, front left, with an official entourage, burns the mortgage of the Central Y's predecessor facility at Ellis and Mason.

**The Y pool, right, with its period tiling will remain closed when the 1910 building is reincarnated.** Below: at 94, Tommy Travis, with Executive Director Carmela Gold, is a former Y gymnast, now a weight-lifter.



PHOTOS BY JOHN HERSHEY

# Supe candidate's bizarre email crusade for strip club

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have been helpful to them."

Club management has continued to ignore other major sections of the injunction. Each incident of noncompliance is subject to a fine of up to \$2,500 in civil penalties. For example, noise from the club mustn't be heard outside. TL police reported five violations in April, the same month a dancer inside was stabbed in the thigh by an irate female competitor. That's \$12,500 just for one month of noise complaints.

Threet said there's no evidence the club has furnished a management phone number to neighbors, compiled a log of complaints and how they were handled, attended every monthly TL police community meeting and made the log available — all violations of the agreement signed in March.

No club representative furnished a log or spoke up as required at the July 28 community meeting when the after-hours permit question came up again. Officer Torres reported the police had issued Pink Diamonds five citations in June for failing to have an after-hours permit, as the injunction requires. Torres said police responded to troubles at the club 120 times during the first five months of 2009. That could be \$300,000 in fines if each incident was cited and upheld — not likely — and certainly the city has another small fortune tied up in

the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of police hours involved.

Most incidents arise when juiced-up crowds leave other clubs at closing and converge on Pink Diamonds as an after hours "in" club. Arguments and fights break out on the sidewalk, in the street and in parking lots. Some of the combatants carry guns.

The permit violations are debatable. Smith, club manager David Muhammad, Smith's lawyer Terence Hallinan, and Alan maintain the business doesn't need a permit. Entertainment Commission guidelines require a place of entertainment to have an after-hours permit only if it sells beverages or fresh food. Pink Diamonds doesn't; its vending machine that sells Red Bull doesn't count.

Threet said he offered Hallinan, the former district attorney, a closer reading of the Police Code, Section 1070 (a) and (b) that defines after hours as 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. and requires a business to have a permit if it serves food or beverages — or if entertainment "is furnished or occurs upon the premises."

"It's required by the injunction and the code," Threet said. "Hallinan didn't agree at first. But then he came back and said yes and said they'd apply for a permit and follow the law."

However, the commission can't issue a permit to an ex-felon. And Smith, The Extra has learned, was sentenced to three years in

state prison in 2002 after plea bargaining for tax evasion, according to a Franchise Tax Board report. Smith, then 33, was running a similar operation in Vallejo — as Platinum Pleasures Entertainment — and owed the state about \$6,000 with penalties for 2000.

The report reads in part: "During 1998-1999, investigators say Smith applied for and received a California Driver License in the name of Damon Morris and in the name Pervice Watts. With each new name, he also provided a false Social Security number. While applying for these identifications, Smith certified under penalty of perjury he had never applied for a California driver license in any other name."

"Using the name Pervice Watts and a false Social Security number, Smith completed a residential loan application in 2000. The monthly income and account balance listed on the application were shown to be false. During the application process, under penalty of perjury, Smith attested to the accuracy of the information."

The case was a joint investigation of the California Department of Justice, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Franchise Tax Board.

Threet, in a telephone interview, said that Smith dismissed as "bullshit" one of the recent police citations for lack of after-hours permit. He read from a police report that quoted Smith

saying to officers, "This shit ain't going anywhere — they're just going to throw this out."

Meanwhile, nearby neighbors continue to feel victimized. A handful of Antonia Manor residents who feared reprisals asked the city attorney's investigator if they could be anonymous. One woman had seen the slain man lying on the sidewalk. They were assured there was safety in their numbers.

David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director and an avid supporter of Pink Diamonds throughout its travails, complained to Threet in a July 17 email that he had been threatened on the street "in a very hostile fashion" by people who thought he had organized the Antonia Manor residents against the club. He had been made a "target" that day along with the SRO staff and its residents, he said.

Villa-Lobos, an announced District 6 supervisorial candidate, concluded with a threat: "If I get hurt or harmed in any way over your outreach effort at the Antonia you can be assured I will file suit against your office and TNDC big time."

Later that night he sent an email to Police Chief Heather Fong, copying Threet and TL Capt. Gary Jimenez, saying his personal safety was "extremely compromised and endangered" and that he needed immediate police protection.

"He said he was repeatedly threatened,"

Threet said. "He said it was by Pink Diamonds supporters, not management. I asked him to provide details. But I never got a response. And he never filed a police report."

This reporter on July 19 received an ominous email from Villa-Lobos. The confusing heading said it was a message from David Villa-Lobos to himself. The subject line was: "Frm: 18 Year Antonia Resident-Senior." The message was a raw threat to me.

"Dear David, Maybe it would be a good idea to ask [TNDC Executive Director] Don Falk to order (from the responsible [sic] parties) an official written statement/apology to the effect that this 'party' was not yours, CLA's, or Antonia's idea and send it to perhaps David Mohammed [sic] but definitely to the locations that were asked to participate. Too little too late maybe, but I think you (we nonparticipants) certainly deserve one. And if your name is even mentioned in the CCE article, sue them and the TNDC."

The trail of emails took an even more twisted turn. On July 24, Villa-Lobos sent an email titled "Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Tenderloin Chapter" to Threet, who forwarded it to Capt. Jimenez. Eventually, it got around to probable candidates for District 6 supervisor and to The Extra. Villa-Lobos said Pink Diamonds management is black and a few community leaders — "racists" — were trying to shut it down.

"Actually, this pseudo KKK faction's grand wizard wears an SFPD uniform, another uses a Community Benefits District manager shield-sword to ward off these black business owners, managers, patrons...the other hides behind their low-income senior-disabled tenants," the email said in part. "The latter manipulating tenants through intimidation to file testimony against the club in hopes it will help in getting the club shut down."

Threet told The Extra, "It's not the sort of thing I respond to."

Capt. Jimenez, whose ardent crime-fighting and neighborhood presence has earned him wide community respect, was less restrained in his reply to Threet.

"Thank you for forwarding this latest of emails from Mr. Villa-Lobos attempting to crusade the Pink Diamond's cause through intimidation. It is remarkable that the sixteen young men shot coming or going from this club has in no way caused Mr. Villa-Lobos any concern for his neighbors or the neighborhood he wishes to represent on the Board of Supervisors. I am taking the liberty to email his below character assassination to those in my Command Staff and City Hall who constantly demand Tenderloin Station cater to and investigate all his fictitious accusations of a lack of protection and police enforcement in the Tenderloin." ■