Central City

Tenderloin duty high on SFPD ladder to success

Neighborhood captains use it as steppingstone

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE Tenderloin Police Station is a proving ground for its captains, says Gary Jimenez, who headed it for three years, from 2006 to ’09. “It’s a very challenging assignment [with] two main issues confronting the neighborhood — drug abuse and sales and quality of life,” Capt. Jimenez wrote in an email to The Extra. “Successfully address these and he or she will have proven their ability to handle any task the city asks of them.”

That will be good news for the neighborhood’s new captain, John Joseph Garrity, promoted June 24 of his 28 years on the force — so long that he’s worked as a sergeant or lieutenant under all of the last six TL captains, who give him an unqualified thumbs-up.

Some of his predecessors took big steps when they left the Tenderloin. Susan Manheimer, commanding officer of the Tenderloin Task Force from 1998 until May 2000, was named chief of police for San Mateo, a post she still holds. Her TL days were “the best times of my life and career,” she says, with the neighborhood “a microcosm of society’s successes and failures that let me see how I could make a difference.”

Her successor, Steve Tacchini, named captain just before the new TL station opened in October 2000, stayed two years. His Tenderloin tenure, he believes, was the basis for future advancements: “The neighborhood had huge problems, but it taught me about the complexities of working in a high-density, diverse community.”

Tacchini’s transfer in 2002 to captain of Central Station — a much larger station serving downtown, the Tenderloin, and the Financial District — was the best of times in 1986 when Otto Duffy lived in the Aarti Hotel at 391 Leavenworth St., TNDC’s first SRO, pursuing his dream of working in the homeless sector the way he had in a university in the early 1980s.

A part of that dream was “having a community bathroom, and some still do, though many, due to the increased involvement of nonprofits and government agencies, now have a private toilet and shower, some a tiny kitchenette, plus social services and recent new rules that make SROs safer and protect residents’ rights.”

The city had an estimated 90,000 SRO units in 1940. Now 30,000 people are living in about 500 SROs.

Otto Duffy has lived in SROs for 24 years. He understands the SRO culture — “It’s depressing sometimes. I try not to think about it” — yet chooses to live in the most affordable housing in the city.

Residents who have lived this life for decades

BY TOM CARTER

SINGLE Room Occupancy hotels have a 200-year legacy in San Francisco. It’s the cheapest living accommodations money can buy — the last refuge before homelessness, or the first welcome step up from it. SRO rooms are little more than a large box. They measure on average 8 by 10 feet — not an easy space to live in. But they have suitable bathrooms, part-time receptionists, and are in the Tenderloin.

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Otto Duffy

I T was the best of times in 1986 when Otto Duffy lived in the Aarti Hotel at 391 Leavenworth St., TNDC’s first SRO, purchased in 1981. The nonprofit now owns or manages 30 SROs and apartment buildings, most in the Tenderloin.

Duffy had followed his friends to the Aarti — Jimmy Sugarek and Wade Wilson, who contributed to the long-gone Tenderloin Times, Paul Boden, who went on to the Homeless Coalition, and political activist Bruce Winderm, and Darryl Smith and Laurie Lazer, who started the Luggage Store Art Gallery.

Duffy was a forklift operator working down on the Peninsula. Kelly Callen, who went on to become TNDC’s executive director, had a room at the Aarti, too. And Dwight Diaz, who slept outdoors in Cohen Alley (now the TL National Forest), had done so many chores for the hotel he was soon invited inside to live. But Sugarek and Hudson were the main organizers of the self-styled, nonequity co-op and sparked activities such as group cooking for large, communal dinners.

Duffy is in his late 50s. He has a wispy black-and-gray beard like mutton chops gone wild. Born in San Francisco, he attended S.F. State in the early 1980s. “There were a lot of upwardly mobile, functional people, and it was the most pleasant, hopeful hotel I ever lived in,” he says of the Aarti.

But Duffy left in 1988 to live elsewhere when he got a raise to $11.50 an hour. The job ended after four years and he returned to the Aarti in 1992 expecting to renew old times. But the movers and shakers were gone.

“When I came back the standard had changed. The cooking declined. People didn’t have the money. Before, I’d go to farmers’ market and bring back a bunch of vegetables and cook, and the next day, someone else would do it. The cooperative energy...
Tenderloin duty SFPD steppingstone

Of his November transfer to night supervising captain of Field Operations, he says, “Many would not look on it as a reward, but I am having a cop on the beat again — the night watch is very fast-paced and exciting, a perfect assignment.”

Jimenez, on the force for 40 years, says he will retire next year.

Dominic Celaya, Jimenez’s successor, took over here being lieutenant in charge of the general work detail at the Hall of Justice. He became the TL’s shortest-tenured captain, here just seven months before his major reassignment to commander of the Tactical Division, which includes the SWAT, bomb, mounted, canine and other units.

Celaya turned over the reins to Garrity in June.

Garrity, 52, joined the force in 1992 as a patrolman at Central Station, which took in the TL, and was a section head for more than 2½ years, until November 2006. It wasn’t a random assignment. Given her choice of stations to command, she chose TL, where she had spent three years on the Tenderloin Task Force in the early 1990s. It was in the TL, she told a community meeting a month into her captainship, “that I started to listen to people on the street.”

Brown had had 22 years in the department with previous assignments in the Mission, Northern, Bayview and Richmond stations and a job as Administration Bureau commander. From the Tenderloin, Brown was bumped up again to commander, this time of airport investigations. She now is an Operations Bureau night captain.

Jimenez followed Brown. Ubiquitous in the community and affable with neighbors, he seemed to relish his time in the Tenderloin, a place, he said, “that requires some very dedicated officers to address its many social and criminal problems.”

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Garrity, 52, joined the force in 1992 as a patrolman at Central Station, which took in the TL, and was a section head from ‘98 to ‘04, when he was promoted to lieutenant. Shorter stints at Northern Station and with the Tactical Squad, public transit and Homeland Security followed. He returned to the Tenderloin as the officer in charge of the Market Street foot beat unit in 2008. With his promotion, he takes over a company of 105 men and women.

“I feel comfortable in the new job,” Garrity told The Extra. “I’ve been here long enough to know the neighborhood’s saints and the sinners — I know the people and will build on that.”

And he wants a return to what he calls “policing basics — I want the same officers on the same beats all the time so they’ll get to know residents and business owners and the activities there, so they’ll take pride in their work.” Do that, he says, “and all else will fall into place.”

Garrity’s promotion delighted Manheimer. “It’s one of the most remarkable, enjoyable things I’ve heard in a long time. He’s part of the Tenderloin’s heart and soul, the original community police officer, the real deal.”
Bowers’ turn to howl

W
et will leave it for others to independently review this new book by Ed Bowers, a security guard who moonlights as a poet. Here we simply want to hip you to an important new work from the hood.

Bowers works graveyard for The Extra, serving as its somewhat self-indulgent Art Beat writer. He’s the one who brought you “Will Bark for Food” and a fine photo poem series. So, clearly, my effort here is self-serving.

Many months back, Bowers started emceeing readings at his hangout, the 21 Club, “diviest bar in the Tenderloin,” Esquire calls it. The landmark watering hole is smack on the hot corner of the Tenderloin Arts Corridor. It’s also now an arts venue: The 21 Club hosts the only ongoing poetry readings this side of Brainwash.

To stay busy, Bowers wrote this concept piece of 21 poems. Turns out the idea provided this stream-of-consciousness writer some welcome structure and focus. To wit, a few choice tidbits plucked from among the poems.

1. I admire people who put tattoos on their faces.
   They’re not trying to impress me.
   They’re trying to warn me.

2. Hemingway was afraid of nouns.
   Hemingway loved war.
   War is full of verbs.

3. The Universe is points of light
   fogged by points of view.
   I don’t want someone to save me.
   I want me to save me.
   I’m sitting here inside me.
   Whoever created me is gone.
   I am my own responsibility.

There are those of you who will be put off by Bowers’ unabashed desire for drink and his perhaps overwrought reverence for neighborhood oases. But it is what it is, as we say, and refer you to the latter two excerpts above to savor his understanding of the ultimate bottom line when it comes to abuse.

I think “21 Poems” is a fine work by the Tenderloin bard. He even lives practically next door to where The Blackhawk once wailed. Now it’s his turn to howl. It’s published by Study Center Press as a central city extra.

What adds to the uniqueness of this little book of timeless poetry are images captured during a single evening of the poetry readings, sponsored by The Extra, that Bowers presents at the 21 Club the second Wednesday of every month. The artful journalism of Lenny Limjoco, Study Center art director and photographer, play point and counterpoint with the 21 poems.

You can get a copy at The 21 Club or at The Extra — $5 either way. ■

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The TL is not the best place to get old in. But what can I do about it? Backs off. "Maybe I was too quick. The TL is not the best place to get old in. But what can I do about it?"

The Ritz had a community kitchen on the mezzanine, recently renovated. Over the years it hasn't been the oasis Duffy wanted. The cooperative spirit is missing, and utensils left behind disappear and often people don't clean up after themselves.

The thefts in the hotel may not be the residents' sticky fingers, Duffy suggests, but their guests and the people who sneak in could be responsible. He won't directly criticize his fellow residents.

The Ritz is a Section 8 hotel for people with mental or physical disabilities; rent is $750 monthly. Duffy says he's retired so pays 30% of his income; the government makes up the rest.

Cock pot cooking in his room is okay but hot plates are forbidden, though some residents ignore the rule. With his budget, Duffy eats at "all the soup kitchens."

Duffy has a petulant streak because, he says, he's never satisfied.

"Having been in the Air Force, I'm challenged to find anything as pleasant as that was. But the Ritz is better than many. The biggest problem is the behavior issue."

Duffy, who volunteered for several years in District 6 Supervisor Chris Daly's office, and now volunteers for Daly's former aide Supervisor John Avalos, says he doesn't have the answers.

"But I try to get people to vote and take responsibility for their neighborhood and district to defend the public resources that are the basis of our well-being," he says. "Then I think they'll start thinking of the public resources that are the basis of our well-being."

"This milk will get so cold," Ayers says, taking a carton out of the fridge, "it will give you an ice cream headache."

Many afternoons she socializes with Filipina friends in the hotel lobby, relaxing after a morning of cleaning and tidying her rooms. Church on Sunday, First Christian Ministry fills her hours. Evenings she likes watching "Cops," and then the 5 a.m. news. After the news he turns the radio on and sleeps until 10 a.m. During the day Ayers is in his room for roughly eight hours. He doesn't have a sink in the corner, microwave, an oven, a PC, and a 1950s GE refrig-

You see a lot of sick people making bad life choices because it's white and tried to smoke it, Ayers says. He understands addiction. His brother overdosed on heroin twice. He has no family here, but he was so happy to be with him again — I just wanted to see everything with my hus-

Carmen Sigua, 77, two years a widow, still feels secure in her unit at the Alexander and in the neighborhood.

"The TL is not the best place to get old in. But what can I do about it?"

Ayers has the spent 18 years in the same third-

floor room in what he calls a "nice setup." About 130 of the 11 hours he's awake, Ayers says, he's back in his room by 4:20 a.m., talking to people or just observing. The time out-

Carmen Sigua

Feisty Jim Ayers, whose personal mission is to improve the Hotel, knows the baggage that comes with cheap rent.

"I have to get out of the environment and drive it around the block until the death in there in the winter. It all gets old," she said.

"This milk will get so cold," Ayers says, taking a carton out of the fridge, "it will give you an ice cream headache."

Bedtime most prized possession is his stereo with its wire-

Ayers feels like pounding the wall himself some-

times because the bathroom situation is so frustrating. Sometimes there are feces on the seat and urine on the floor and when it's cold the unheated facility takes inconveniences to another level. "You freeze to death in the winter. It all gets old," he says.

"Going to the bathroom praying no one's down there, it gets mind-boggling after a while," he says. It's worse in the middle of the night. He has to get up to dress, grab his keys and toilet paper, lock his door and hope that when he gets there the toilet is avail-

Ayers' most prized possession is his stereo with its wire-

升级的照明系统，以及电动装置和细管等电器部件，也可以运行连续但又不被看到的刷墙运动。所有这些都无需做任何工作。甚至可以实现自动的、无须人工干预的刷墙运动。

Carmen Sigua

Sixth Street. Ayers feels like pounding the wall himself some-

times because the bathroom situation is so frustrating. Sometimes there are feces on the seat and urine on the floor and when it's cold the unheated facility takes inconveniences to another level. "You freeze to death in the winter. It all gets old," he says.

"He doesn't leave the Lawrence because 'it's the same at every SRO,'" and rent here is cheap ($357) a month for his room. "You have to put up with it," Ayers says. "If I get down in the damps, I'll turn on some cartoons or go outside and walk around the neighborhood."}

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

— CONOR WALLACE

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

— CONOR GALLAGHER

Cecil Baker, 59, is sitting in the Ambassador Hotel's small lobby, back to the window, his short blonde wig backlit by the morning sun. He's wearing earrings, a string of beige beads and a colorful brown, black and tan fragment smocked that he says is his wife's garment he bought at Ross. He prefers to wear it as a shirt, today, over black tights. Baker's dimpled, pudgy face works as he talks and his eyes are sincere behind large glasses. He acknowled-

Cecil Baker

Baker, like many other SRO dwellers, enjoys a few creature comforts. But for all its

He's thankful that he has a car so he can escape when he needs to. “A lot of people
don't leave their room except for beer, cigarettes, drugs or food.” They're not much help in his battles with the landlord.

People in the hotel are a good bunch, but when push comes to shove they clam up because they're afraid of the landlord. The former Army man has no such fears and likes to cite something his grandfather told him. “Money can buy you a lot of things, but one thing in this world that money can't buy is respect.”

He emphasizes respect. “Don't lose it. Don't let it go, because you'll never get it back.”

While the Lawrence has come a long way from the “hell” and “dump” it was 18 years ago, improvements still need to be made, Ayers says. His eyes are sincere behind large glasses. He acknowledges the SRO's amenities, “It has a bathroom now, for example,” but he worries about the things that need to be done.

“I moved into my completed room in 2002 with all its amenities,” Baker says. “It has a bathroom now, for example.” But he worries about the things that need to be done. “Now it’s so expensive to live here I couldn’t afford it. I’m on Social Security disability. And the people who live here are on Social Security. It’s a bad time of year for me.”

Fifty rooms at the Ambassador are designated for HUD McKinney Shelter Plus Care Section 8 rental assistance. The remaining rooms are available to anyone earning 50% or less than the area media income. In 2007, that was $65,500. Most qualify.

A social worker reaches around Baker's walker and I feel good about that and (Rev.) Glenda Hope was doing the same thing. I was one expert to help people get on SSI, too.” The Ambassador hotel was known as San Francisco's AIDS hotel and a docu-

scar. “I’ll keep doing the same thing I’m doing,” he says.

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Eric Lutz
Loved rock 'n' roll and NASCAR

After living at the Hotel Essex for two years, Eric Lutz still had few friends among the residents.

“He was an avid reader who mostly kept to himself and didn’t participate in our events,” said Lisa Howe, the hotel’s social worker. Mr. Lutz died May 24 of complications from MS and seizure disorder, she said. He was 49.

Fiercely independent, Mr. Lutz seemed to have had no family relationships. Howe said. She thought he had lived in San Francisco for many years, and she knew he’d been a sergeant in the Air Force. She didn’t know if he had seen action.

Most of the eight people who came to remember Mr. Lutz at a June 3 memorial were staff, with a notable exception.

Eric was one of my best friends,” said Conde J. (CJ) Peoples, who lives in the Tenderloin, but not at this SRO. “We met two years ago and we just clicked — it was amazing because we were opposites in so many ways.”

People teetorially tried to describe what his friend had meant to him. He shook his head in disbelief at “the rarity” of their relationship and the contradictions in Mr. Lutz’s personality: “He shared what he had and was a gentle, loving man, but he was also crazy sometimes and a stubborn son of a bitch.”

Rock in roll was a passion. “Whitesnake, Crosby, Stills & Nash, the Rolling Stones — he especially loved those groups, and we’d go to the Gangway and listen to them on the jukebox,” Peoples recalled.

Loved rock ‘n’ roll and NASCAR

Eric knew all the cars, what they were, who the drivers were,” Peoples said. “It gave him real joy. NASCAR is so completely not me, but he loved it.”

Another of their favorite pastimes was to watch NASCAR races on TV. “Eric knew all the cars, what they were, who the drivers were,” Peoples said. “It gave him real joy. NASCAR is so completely not me, but he enjoyed his enthusiasm.”

When his health worsened, Mr. Lutz rejected Peoples’ offer to help physically — which pleased me off so much,” Peoples said. “But I respected his choice and it taught me a lot about ‘going’ — about dying — in one’s own way.”

Two weeks before he died, Mr. Lutz was quite ill and hadn’t bugged out of his room for many days, Howe said. Suddenly, he showed up downstairs, insisted he was feeling good, went out and ate a big meal and brought flowers back for the staff.

He really was a lover of life,” Howe said.

Tenant Services counselor Megan Smith called him a loving, thoughtful man who sometimes stopped in just to thank the staff.

“I enjoy doing this kind of work, assisting people. I have been to most places and done most things, so I know how to solve a lot of problems. Just talk to Marvis,” he says. “In 1989, after the earthquake they (the city) offered me an apartment on the 200 block of Eddy Street and the 300 block of Ellis. Phillips’ commitment to the community is considerable as a member of Central City Democrats and Alliance for a Better District 6. Both groups encourage central city dwellers to participate in elections and government.

When Lutz registered to vote in 1989, he was 43. He was registered as an independent. But when it comes to volunteering, he does not believe he will ever stop. Lately he has been writing letters on behalf of the Alliance for a Better District 6.

“He keeps me busy and it keeps me from thinking about my wife.” He even turned his heartbreak into positive action when he lobbied TNDC for weeks after her death to make grief counseling available for the residents. “It took me 50 phone calls,” he says, “but now we’ve got it through our social services.”

— JORAN VARDUP

Tom Carter contributed to this story. Jolene Vardup and Conor Gallagher, N.F. State students in Professor Jon Funahashi’s journalism class, wrote the profiles of Jim Ayers and Marvis Phillips as a class assignment.
COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

SPECIAL EVENTS


Police Commission meets at Tenderloin Station community room, Wed., Aug. 25, 6 p.m., 201 Turk St. Captain Garrity will present State of the Tenderloin District Report; public comment period follows. Info: 345-7300.

ARTS EVENTS

“Harvest: What have you gathered?” call for art, TL CBD gallery, for winter exhibition. All media welcome, must address harvest call for art, TL CBD gallery.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

8

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