Filipino WWII vets let down again on payout

Congress fails to pass bill that would benefit 325 in S.F.

BY TOM CARTER

A DOZEN veterans from the war in the Philippines showed up Oct. 8 at the Veterans Equity Center at Sixth and Mission streets asking where to get forms to apply for their long-awaited benefits for fighting the Imperial Japanese forces during WWII. They’d read in the paper that Congress had approved the war benefits.

“I can’t remember where they said they read that — I don’t read newspapers because I don’t trust them,” said Luisa Antonio, the center’s executive director. “Maybe it was the Philippine Tribune. But there are no forms and the government has never issued guidelines.”

So the vets’ big win was bogus. And the issue’s dead for this lame duck Congress,” Antonio said.

“I had to tell [the vets] that the Senate wouldn’t go for it,” said Representative (the vets) that the Senate wouldn’t go for it,” said Representative Antonio two weeks earlier had Associated Press had reported that the House had overwhelmingly approved a bill that would make one-time payments of $15,000 to Filipinos who are U.S. citizens and $9,000 to noncitizen Filipino veterans.

But the story didn’t say the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2008 had passed, only that it needed the upper house vote. And the Senate didn’t like the House bill. It wouldn’t even allow the convening of a conference committee to fashion a compromise. Thus the latest attempt, in a failed series of benefits bills that started in Congress 15 years ago, died.

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“The Republicans stopped it. They say… Iraq is the priority, not the Philippines.”

Luisa Antonio
VETERANS EQUITY CENTER

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Art Deco-tinged buildings at 125-29 Hyde St. were film exchanges for the Hollywood studios.
Pink Diamonds manager hires ex-Tenderloin police captain to plan security for club

by Tom Carter

Pink Diamonds can’t seem to shake its past and is under heightened scrutiny to shape up and stop the rowdy crowds outside late at night.

6TH ST. RESIDENTS

Central City Hospitality House unveils its new Sixth Street Self-Help Center on Nov. 10 with a grand-opening splash featuring light refreshments and appearances by Supe Chris Daly and other community leaders. The center at 109 and 181 Sixth St. between Mission and Howard will offer case management for health and mental health clients, employment resources and socialization activities for Sixth Street corridor residents. The center will also provide a seniors-only drop-in area. Hospitality House, which also operates the Tenderloin Self-Help Center on Turk Street, runs the new Sixth Street center under contract with Department of Public Health. It will be open weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The grand opening, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., is open to the public.

DISABLED PET OWNERS

Want to spread some good cheer this holiday season? PAWS can use your help. PAWS (Pets Are Wonderful Support) in SoMa helps homeless and limited clients care for their pets. Each December, volunteers distribute pet treats and toys to PAWS clients. This year’s event is set for Dec. 7, and PAWS is looking for 80-90 volunteers to help with the distribution. Volunteers will work in teams and will be assigned to a 10 a.m.-noon shift or a noon-2 p.m. shift. Those without cars will be paired with people who have one. To volunteer, call Daniel Matlay at 979-9950, or e-mail him at info@pawsof.org.

If you have some good news, send it to marya@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.
In August 2007, Earthlink pulled out and that "near enough to pick up the signal" began with a computer access to the Internet. The repeaters are good up to 500 feet and, broadcast wireless units called repeaters, was the test site for a Google-funded pilot.

"It's a lot easier to make a bad decision, going to be a lot more meandering people," said Tenderloin Health's drop-in group leader, Jackie Jenks, executive director of Community生动性 Health, which opens at 11 a.m., said her program is not equipped to absorb the Tenderloin Health clients. She said the center is geared primarily for clients who are housed but need case management or mental health or employment services, while Tenderloin Health's drop-in center is specifically set up for homeless clients.

"Hospitality House can't fill that void," she said, adding that a recent capacity survey showed that her agency is already stretched to the limits. "We were over capacity for what we feel is safe and healthy."
Art Deco in the Tenderloin

BY ANNE MARIE JORDAN
URBAN DESIGN REPORTER

ARCHITECTURAL historian Michael Corbett identified 20 Art Deco/Moderne buildings with the document he submitted in May to the State Historical Resources Commission, calling for establishment of an Uptown Tenderloin Historic District. The commission’s nomination for federal historic district status is now in Washington, D.C., awaiting the listing of the neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pending federal approval, approximately 35 blocks — roughly bounded by Market, McAllister, Golden Gate, Larkin, Geary, Taylor, Ellis and Mason streets — will be under certain new construction guidelines monitored by the City Planning Commission. More protection is expected because significant tax breaks will become available whenever old buildings in the district are renovated.

Corbett said he based his report, under-written by the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Council, on research conducted by Anne Bloomefield, who studied the value of the area’s architecture in the early 1980s. The combined efforts of the two resulted in a 152-page document identifying each building’s style of architecture along with other factual information. Almost all of the buildings in the 1920s to the early 1960s are represented.

The Art Deco buildings are classified in the report as Moderne. Moderne refers to the period’s later years, when the look was sleek, streamlined and more rounded in appearance. Art Deco of the earlier period typically has more architectural flourish. The Tenderloin buildings seem often to have a blend of elements — Art Deco and Moderne. Approximatly 20 buildings are listed in this category. Unfortunately, many of the Moderne/Art Deco buildings in the Tenderloin today have been altered such that evidence of the original architecture is obscured or has vanished. At 200 Turk St., for example, a colorful mural on the face of the former film exchange building obscures its Moderne characteristics. One exterior light fixture suggests the past style.

Other adulated Art Deco buildings in the Tenderloin, now to identify the era.

The Pink Diamond Gentlemen’s Club (formerly the Mayfair) at 210 Jones and the New Century Theatre at 814 Larkin have suggestions of Art Deco. The rounded blade sign is the most outstanding feature at the New Century. Another place, the King Kong Cafe and pool hall at 714 Farrell, still has black vitrolite glass — a popular material of the time — on its exterior and an entrance with linoleum tiles in the shape of pyramids. Otherwise, there is not much left to identify the era.

Here are addresses of Art Deco/Moderne places that were named in the Corbett report. Take a daytime walking tour to find some interesting architectural discoveries. The descriptions combine the report’s findings and my observations.

526-48 Jones St. — Paradise Massage, up the street from Dottie’s True Blue Cafe. Steamline details on parapet; painted brick facade; extensive alteration to original.

814-20 Larkin St. — Former Larkin Theatre, now the New Century Theatre with alterations to the original; vertical blade sign remains.

125 Hyde St. — Former film exchange with out their “Déja Vu” album. The Deco Bar at 510 Larkin St. — painted mauve-high gloss tiles, metallic paints and the newly invented vitrolite glass. Columns, piers, pilasters, panels and metal grillwork were common.

Over time, many of these kinds of details have been altered or replaced. So many of the buildings in the Tenderloin once identified as Art Deco have been greatly changed from the original. The corner building at 250 Hyde is deco-rated with tiling in aqua and pink. How much of the facade is original?

A more reliable record of Art Deco’s survi-val on Hyde Street is in the remaining terra cotta deco facade and the original metal windows still visible.

At 125 Hyde the front has a prominent stepped design on the exchange buildings. Speed lines — horizontal and vertical — zigzags and curves, chevrons and rays, swirls and squares are all on view. These elements are either separately attached to the buildings or built as part of the actual composition.

The interiors of the film exchange buildings, on the other hand, were more functional than ornate, consisting pretty much of an entrance lobby, a few offices on the second floor and the all-important first-level vaultlike rooms that were used for safely storing the precious films. (The silver nitrate in the early films made them highly volatile.)

In addition, it was common for an exchange to have an editting room for quick splicing of movies that were damaged during handling, and also a small screening room for special advanced previews — meant for the trade and press only.

As the buildings vary from address to address, with a number of apparent vacancies. A few of the buildings house social service agencies; others are rented out to businesses.

The only enterprise operating out of a film exchange building that is still tied to the entertainment business is at 245 Hyde, the Hyde Street Studios. Top-name musicians and vocalists have been going through the building’s new cobalt blue door as far back as 1969, when Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young whirled off “The Deco Bar at 510 Jones.”

Manager Jeff Cieland doesn’t want to see the day when Hyde Street Studios has to find a new location. There’s a lot of sophisticated
where it's at, what to look for

lettering “Motion Picture Studio & Laboratory” on first floor; main lobby, roof terrace, garden with fountains, and ballroom available for public rental. Two recent awards: 2008 Art Deco Society of California for preservation and 2008 American Institute of Architects for design of lobby chandeliers. The district’s best Art Deco building. 741-45 O’Farrell St — Now Kong King Cafe and pool hall. Small building sandwiched between apartments, black vitrolite fascia and side columns; pointed glass storefront; blade sign; linoileum flooring. 640 Ellis St. — Former Waitresses’ Union Hall, now Mandel Hall and offices. Symmetry in composition; eight decorative sunburst panels; vertical pairs; zigzag parapet; Mayan motif. 632-38 Ellis St. — Originally a machine shop, now AutoSportHouse, mechanic for high-end automobiles such as Porsche and Mercedes-Benz. One story; decorative but altered front; brickwork with tile insets, stepped parapet, some original windows. 604 Ellis St. — Hotel Eseux sign added to composition; some original windows; exterior light fixture; colorful mural not original. 636 Ellis St. — Former film exchange for high-end automobiles such as Porsche and Mercedes-Benz. One story; decorative but altered front; brickwork with tile insets, stepped parapet, some original windows.

and expensive — sound and recording equipment that would have to be moved. It is possible, however, that might happen in the near future because of the pending sale of the studio building, which is bundled in a sales package along with others on the block. According to Josh Nasvick, representing Zephyr Realty, the sale of the 26,640-square-foot site is “in contract.” Asking price was $3,750,000. The exact fate of the property is still to be determined, with the original proposal being a condominium development that provides limited preservation of the film exchange.”

The Hamilton at 631 O’Farrell St. is an Art Deco building that has come back in recent years to its Art Deco finery. Among other honors from the American Institute of Architects and the Art Deco Society of California. Built in 1929 as a modish hotel for the then-named Alexander Hotel became a draw for long-term residents as well as for theater and movie people staying in town. Lauren Bacall and Vivian

The Hamilton (above), at 631 O’Farrell St., is the neighborhood’s best Art Deco building. This year it has won two awards: prestigious American Institute of Architects honors and the Art Deco Society of California’s prize for preservation. The Hamilton, Carney says, is an Art Deco win-win for everyone. Interior architecture has been brought back to its original, resulting in an increase of an owner’s property value. “And,” he says, “we’ve made a contribution to the neighborhood.”

The Hamilton is home to a mix of people, with approximately 50% retirees. There are many young professionals who want to live in the increasingly “Trendylon,” also couples with young children among the residents.”

The Hamilton’s history and description are available on its Website www.thehamiltonassociation.com.
and keeps in close touch with the Library of Congress where legislative reports are current in
in print.
Hopes had run high this year for the 5,000 Filipino vets in the United States. Half live in California, the rest are scattered around the country. More than 1,000 are in Los Angeles and 1,500 live in the Bay Area and Sacramento. San Francisco has 25 of them. A vet runs $900 a month to live on.

Dependent Filippinos, as they are called, are not entitled to the same benefits as veterans. Many of them are very old. I'm at a dying age. We have no real medical benefits. I've been praying for it," Felix says. "Already we are sold out. You have to keep adjusting." The VA pays a monthly allowance to the vets, but it is not enough to live on. "That's when we started marching," Damil says. "We were fed up. We had nothing to lose."

"It's barely enough to live on," Felix says. "We have to keep adjusting." The VA pays a monthly allowance to the vets, but it is not enough to live on. "That's when we started marching," Damil says. "We were fed up. We had nothing to lose."

Ceferino says. "It would be something to spend before I die." Damil's weight dropped from 130 pounds to 100. He suffered from malaria, beri beri and malnutrition.

Of the vets in SoMa, the TL and the Mission, and in San Francisco as an early-signed U.S. Army soldier, Ceferino receives benefits through the legislation Congress passed for WW II GIs who survived the Bataan Death March butchers. But vets who are residents of the Philippines only get half the amount that U.S.-residing vets get, a bitch that’s been bitterly fought for six months. A rice bag was his blanket.

They share a room to save money.

Compensation legislation has died during just about every congressional session since 1939, when Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, a disabled WWII vet himself, introduced the first equity bill. It was sent to committee and never saw the light of day.

But with each subsequent session, the drum beat and the demonstrations in Filipino communities
totered for a payoff, as the grim chapter of the war in the Philippines was recounced.

On July 26, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt conscripted Filipino men and boys into the U.S. armed forces and promised them benefits. The Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Filipino Scouts served with GIs in the U.S. Army Forces in the Far East.

"Sen. Akaka said he would revisit the issue in a compromise measure that would allow the Philippines to maintain its independence and improve the moral, social and economic conditions of the Filipino people." Instead, the measure was tabled after three years.

Felix Damil joined the Philippine Scouts, a part of the U.S. 45th Infantry, in March 1946, six months after the war ended, and became a clerk. He served for six months. A rice bag was his blanket. Felix heard there was a move afoot in Washington to get benefits for the Filipino vets. So in September 2002, in a ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, he became a U.S. citizen. And the next year left the small family rice and tobacco farm to come here. His brother followed two years later.

The benefits never arrived, and it could be ques-
tionale whether he would receive them as a post-
war vet, although he could be made eligible for medical benefits.

"I've been praying for it," Felix says. "Already we are very old. I'm at a dying age. We have no real means for a good living. Just a little something a month from the government would suit us. They gave us no water. We started at 11 in the morning."

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"It's barely enough to live on," Felix says. "We have to keep adjusting." The VA pays a monthly allowance to the vets, but it is not enough to live on. "That's when we started marching," Damil says. "We were fed up. We had nothing to lose."

Damil still suffers from the war illnesses. Damil's weight dropped from 130 pounds to 100. He suffered from malaria, beri beri and malnutrition.

Ceferino's appboval was applied in 2004 for 90% of the maximum benefit. The next year he came to the U.S. Army and spent 24 hours. He receives $2,527 a month, Ceferino says, about $50,000 a year.

Damil made a camp section leader for 90 men he chose and assigned to work details, including getting water, tending horses, digging graves. Even sick prisoners were made to work. If too weak to stand, they were sent to the camp hospital. "It was very hard," Damil says. "I don't know whether he was there to help."

Dead men were stripped and bound at the ankles and wrists and carried on a pole. The bodies were buried, lying on their sides, 15 to 18 per pit.

"We got a spoonful of rice to eat at 10 in the morning," Damil says, "and another at 3 o'clock. That's all. We got one gallon of water a day. We're old, his eyes growing wide. 'That's for 90 men.'

Damil's weight dropped from 130 pounds to 100. He suffered from malaria, beri beri and malnutrition.

Many Filipino POWs were released on Oct. 5, four months after Japan granted an amnesty for Filipino soldiers, and Damil was among them. He immediately requested med-
tical treatment and was hospitalized in Baguio until Dec. 20. Then he was taken by truck to Tuguegarao, capital of Cagayan Valley, where the governor honored him.

But the war continued. When Damil felt well enough he rejoined the army in February 1945. "I was strong as a bull," he says. "I gave everything to the army."

Damil was discharged on May 7, 1946, and went home to live with his family who sup-

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Visionary exhibition of blind artists

BY ED BOWERS

At the moment, I am observing a photograph by a legally blind artist named Michael Jameson. The photo is from the Lighthouse for the Blind’s 2007 Annual Insight art exhibit. It’s titled “Messy Oak Mudslinger,” and rarely have I seen a depiction of an animal — in this case a rodeo bull named Messy Oak Mudslinger — so nakedly reveals the underlying awareness and intelligence concealed by the animal mind that the human mind, suffering terminal egotism, rarely glimpses.

This particular bull is the grandfather and father of rodeo bulls currently forcing it on the longhorn circuit. There is an infinite amount of wisdom, guts and knowledge in its head, the face that has so brilliantly been captured by the photographer.

Perhaps being legally blind cuts through the human image sufficiently that the person can actually see other life forms better than someone who is too full of himself, and enables the artist to perceive that creatures, other than humans, are full of life and thought.

At the current exhibic’s reception, I observed a digital drawing on canvas by Sharon Hayes titled “Self Confon,” an elegant, graceful representation of the need, or desire, to go inside yourself. A young black woman, who appears naked, is holding her head to her knees and thinking deeply. It succeeds like few drawings do in the West in representing the meditative mind as a poignant, vulnerable and erotic power.

This is the Lighthouse’s 19th “Insights” art exhibit, and in last’s years catalog, Charles Curtis Blackwell, who also exhibited last year and whose work I reviewed in Central City Extra a couple of years ago, mentioned in his short autobiography that he uses “his blindness as an asset …”

I believe this statement to be the key to appreciating each year’s exhibit not as a sentimental and condescending gesture of charity to blind people, but as a serious display of art that is every bit as insightful and visionary and profound as that done by people with a normal 20/20 vision.

In fact, there is nothing handicapped about the artists at this exhibition. We are all born in the dark and no one sees much of anything at all but what his limited mind allows him to observe. The human mind is probably much a mystery. We bump around in the dark thinking we’re smart while creating wars and calamities. We live in fear. We kid ourselves.

Children are afraid of the dark. But there’s something they find delightfully exciting about that fear.

In the dark all possibilities exist, and if you can make friends with the fear, then it turns into curiosity, courage and an infinite range of possibilities concealed in the darkness of the mind. I hate to sound like a positive thinker, but all the positive solutions are there waiting.

After studying the “Insights” art catalogues displaying the work of this year’s and last’s exhibition, it finally became clear to me that the word “handicapped” is either a con game played by the human mind on the human mind or an ironic joke. These artists are alive and struggling and need your appreciation NOW.

The “Insights” artists have invisible eyes. They are visionaries.

Though legally blind, they are capable of seeing clearly visions that other people who are handicapped by a more solidified reality don’t, won’t or can’t perceive.

Kurt Weston, who used to be a successful fashion photographer, in 1991 was diagnosed with AIDS and later became legally blind due to a related condition, CMV retinitis. He uses his camera as an extension of himself. He is a survivor.

One viewer walked by and was affected by how weird Weston’s photograph appeared to him. That, as far as I am concerned, is a good review, because “weird” challenges people to think.

My favorite Weston photograph is of a man who appears to be horrified by what he sees while holding a camera to the right of his head in order to photograph himself. As I was writing a review of this photograph on a legal pad, an elderly man walked up to me and declared the photograph remarkable.

What happens with really good art is that it challenges each person’s mind in a provocative way. The art at this exhibition does just that.

Charles Blackwell’s portrayals of jazz musicians in ink and acrylic precisely capture the Pain and Ecstasy and Joy of a music I have loved for almost 50 years. They swing.

The other artists at this exhibition are wonderful too, but I would have to turn Central City Extra into an art forum to do them justice. Relative space and time have their limitations.

Go to this exhibit if you have any interest in art at all. These artists are alive and struggling and need your appreciation NOW.

You’ll get a free catalog, and an education.

Careful perusal of this art will affect you in a profound way forever.

P.S. Kim Shuck is the curator of this show and should be given all the credit she deserves for facilitating this wonderful project.

Peer Support Line 575-1400

Office of Self-Help

1095 Market St., Suite 202
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

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...www.sf_rewards.com.

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CENTRAL CITY EXTRA / NOVEMBER 2008

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SUPERVISORS’ COMMITTEES

TENDERLOINHEALTH

Outreach and Community Events November 2008

Health Promotion Forum

Topic: Herpes and Your Health

Speaker: Lisa Sondam, MD, ColoradoHealthLine

Date/Times: Tuesday, November 18, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

HIV Treatment Forum

Topic: HIV & Beyond

Speaker: Joy Fountain, MSW

Date/Times: Monday, November 17, 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Location: 255 Golden Gate

(Choose location change applies only to this forum)

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/Times: Wednesday, November 12, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Thursday, November 13, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health

Orientation: Sunday, November 9, 9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

240 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor

lunch provided

You must register for volunteer trainings. Stop in/call Emile (415) 437-2900 ext. 234.

For a schedule of our current groups or for more information call 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

www.CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net

Dear San Francisco’s,

From time-to-time, our organization recognizes those who unselfishly, tirelessly, and with unwavering dedication serve their great city, and/or respective communities. During the months of September and October of 2008, the following folks have received the Community Leadership Alliance’s certificate of recognition for extraordinary service and leadership:

• Reverend Glenda Hope, SF-Network Ministries (9/10/08)

• Chris Schulman, Mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development (9/20/08)

And for the month of October 2008, our final recipients for this year will be:

• Rob Black, SF-Chamber of Commerce (10/5/08)

• Darish Kayhan, Mayor’s Office (10/16/08)

• Michael Farrah Jr., Mayor’s Office (10/16/08)

• Michael Antonini, SF Planning Commission (10/16/08)

We extend to all of these great people our congratulations, and thank all of them for their service and leadership to our great city of San Francisco.

TOGETHER we can