

## HSA and the Plush Doggie

“Since August 2, 1966 approximately two evenings a week I spend walking the streets of the Tenderloin Area of San Francisco.” Thus began a memo written 50 years ago by Jerry Endres, HSA’s outreach worker in the Tenderloin. “I frequent such places as the Plush Doggie on Market Street, Compton’s on the corner of Taylor and Turk, Penny’s Coffee Shop, the Letterman Club, and especially the streets of Eddy and Ellis. Between the hours of 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. these areas are crowded and teeming with night life, and night people. It is these ‘night people’ that I direct my efforts on a one-to-one basis.”



Tenderloin at Night, 2015

A 1964 audit by the California Department of Social Services criticized HSA for its distance from the city’s low-income communities. This was at the outset of the [War on Poverty](#) and the Civil Rights movement. Political activists, including a young attorney from the Western Addition named Willie Brown, began demanding that the people on welfare have more say in policies that affected their lives. They organized street protests against HSA, advocating for more community control of its decisions.

Ronald Born led the agency at that time. HSA’s director since the Depression, Born had an MBA from Stanford and took a business-like approach to running the agency, emphasizing efficiency. Until the 1960s, his main mandate had been to keep the caseloads down and stay within budget. But in 1966 Martin Luther King and Malcom X were in the news, and a [riot](#) had broken out in Bayview Hunters Point over the police shooting of an African American youth. City government was being roiled by activists. Born responded by hiring community liaisons to reach out to the city’s low-income neighborhoods, develop contacts, and engage the people SF-HSA served.

The experiment, however, quickly backfired, as the liaisons themselves began organizing protests, including sit-ins in Born's office. In a swoop, he fired them all, generating even more controversy.

Somehow the controversy did not touch Jerry Endres. He was the liaison to the [Tenderloin](#). Community outreach was new to HSA. "There was no history to build off of," Jerry said in a recent interview. Having just received a graduate degree in community organizing from the University of Buffalo, he approached his work in that stripe, compiling information about neighborhood needs, interviewing people, and forming teams for community action.

As Jerry talked to residents, he heard about a different Tenderloin community that emerged at night. "Everyone was sleeping during the day," he says. So he took to walking the Tenderloin at night. After a few months, he summarized his findings in a memo to his supervisor, Trudie Kanner, and for the very first time in HSA's history, an official document recognized LGBTQ persons. (Yet many of the people who built the city's social service system, including its earliest pioneers, were gay or lesbian.)

"The Tenderloin Area of San Francisco has long been a refuge for sexual activity that was not either allowed or accepted on a mass basis in other parts of the City. This type of activity includes female prostitution, of girls as young as 14 years of age, young boys hustling themselves for a price to other males, young Lesbians, and "drag queens" (young males dressed as females). It should be clear that the population I am speaking of is between the ages of 14 and 21."

A year before the [Summer of Love](#), thousands of young people from the suburbs were already making the pilgrimage to San Francisco, and while the media focused on the Haight Ashbury district, the Tenderloin was attracting another group of young people: runaway gay youth. Jerry discovered a hidden world that included transgendered people, "and yes, there were transgendered people back then."



### **Youth in the Tenderloin, 1969**

(San Francisco Public Library)

Jerry is quick to point out that there was a broader phenomenon happening at the time of his memo, that thousands of disaffected youth were finding their way to the city. “The kids came looking for adventure, but within a month they were gaunt and addicted to drugs.”

Jerry found that one of the few people doing anything for gay youth was Reverend Edward Henson at [Glide Memorial Methodist Church](#). Henson had started a self-help organization called Vanguard. “Its membership,” Jerry wrote in another memo, “is comprised of youth in the Tenderloin, most of whom are living without adult supervision, participate in homosexual activity, and are economically disadvantaged.” Administered by youth for their own benefit, the group’s activities included protests against restaurants that discriminated against LGBTQ youth, a newsletter, dances, and a coffeehouse where youth could share their experiences. The group also advocated for better access to health and welfare services.

Jerry made a presentation to the Vanguard youth about HSA’s food stamp program. “My purpose in working in this area,” he wrote, “is to identify the needs of this population on a one-to-one basis and help to meet them by my knowledge of resources and ability to guide them to these resources.” To better reach this population, he became a lay minister at Glide. “It is a characteristic, I believe, of this Tenderloin area that treatment...is always handled by a public agency with a resultant labeling of the person.” He cited the need for services “to reach this population in a more personal way,” noting that

until self-help organizations like Vanguard were mature, HSA would “need to bring existing services closer to the persons that are in need.”

Jerry was instrumental in pulling together diverse groups to address the needs of Tenderloin youth. They formed the Tenderloin Youth Committee, comprised of dozens of leaders from various organizations, to survey youth, analyze information, and make recommendations to city leaders. Jerry organized a late-night street-count of Tenderloin youth. He was the author of the group’s 1967 report, *Youth in the Tenderloin* [[link to report under “Youth in the Tenderloin”](#)]. In a statement as true today as it was in 1967, Jerry wrote, “The Tenderloin, while a part of Central City, is also a way of life.” The report was the catalyst for the creation of [Hospitality House](#), an organization still serving the [Tenderloin](#) today.

Jerry also worked with the SOMA and Chinatown neighborhoods. “There were stories in all three places,” he says. In SOMA, he followed his method of developing local informants, asking them what they saw, telling them what he saw and asking if they saw the same. But his work in SOMA was shortened when his main informant, a corner newspaper vendor, was murdered. Jerry’s memory of the neighborhood is shadowed by its violence and despair. “One night I came across a naked woman lying on the street, dead from an overdose. I had to call the police.”

Though he did not speak Cantonese, Jerry was also HSA’s liaison to Chinatown. The neighborhood was in a fever of community organizing in the 1960s, much of it led by the head of the Community Action Program of the [Equal Opportunity Council of San Francisco](#), Larry Jack Wong. As a trained community organizer with access to resources, Jerry was important to Wong. “I was his go-to guy,” Jerry says. This early work led to the formation of [Self Help for the Elderly](#), later involving social workers like [Vera Haille](#) and [Anni Chung](#).

But the culmination of Jerry’s work with HSA was the Tenderloin youth report. “Back then, in order to print it, we had to mimeograph it. We mimeographed 1,000 copies and laid them out on tables to put them together.” When the report was produced, Robert Kennedy was in San Francisco campaigning for the presidency. “I took a copy to one of Kennedy’s aides and said, ‘Look, this is an emerging issue in San Francisco and other areas of the United States.’” The aide promised to give it to Kennedy, but the next day in Los Angeles the senator was assassinated.

Jerry worked at HSA for two and a half years. Because of his Tenderloin report, he got a job as an instructor at the University of San Francisco, teaching community organizing. He later taught at California State University, Monterey. Now retired, Jerry lives in Weed, California, but continues to be involved in the social service community. While at Cal State Monterey, he developed the [Family Matrix Model](#), a family assessment tool that has been adopted by family resource centers statewide, including centers funded by HSA.

Prevention efforts like family resource centers are much harder to measure than intervention efforts like treatment. The Family Development Matrix has been a significant resource to guide child abuse prevention efforts and to measure their success. Over half of San Francisco’s 22 family resource centers use the tool today, and Jerry has helped train staff, evaluate their efforts, and research the needs of low-income families. One of the first trainings he did, ten years ago, was in Born Auditorium.

Over 50 years, Jerry has learned a lot about low-income communities -- how they breathe, what their needs are, how to effectively help them – and today he is thinking about how best to share his experience, how best to convey the lessons of a lifetime of talking to people, asking about their experiences, and thinking about how institutions can make a difference.



Jerry Endres today