

'SF Chronicle' Three-Day Package Marks City's 10 Worst Days

By Joe Strupp

Published: November 17, 2008 11:34 AM ET

NEW YORK The San Francisco Chronicle is tackling two 30th anniversary tragedies this month head-on with a three-day package of stories and images, in print and online, recalling what many still consider the worst 10 days in the city's recent history.

With Nov. 18 marking the three decades since the Jonestown mass suicide at the Peoples Temple and Nov. 27 as the 30th anniversary of the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, the Chronicle sought best to revisit both at once.

"There were a few people in the newsroom who were here then and distinctly remember it," Editor Ward Bushee said. "We are going to try to get ahead of it."

The paper's coverage began Sunday with a two-page spread and overview of both events by reporter Susan Sward, titled "10 Days that Shook S.F."

Monday, a second piece written by Rep. Jackie Speier, who was just elected to congress, follows. Speier was an aide to Rep. Leo Ryan in 1978 and accompanied him on the visit to Jonestown that ended with his death and the deaths of several journalists.

The mass suicide, which had connections to San Francisco because the Peoples Temple started in the city and included hundreds of Bay Area residents, occurred hours later.

Monday's paper also includes comments from the son of the Rev. Jim Jones, who led the Guyana mass suicide, as well as a story about a memorial being planned for the victims.

On Tuesday, reporter Duffy Jennings, who covered the Milk/Moscone assassinations, recounts the tragedies.

All of the coverage can be found at www.sfgate.com.

Bushee said one of the views emerging 30 years later is an effort to make sure Moscone, a longtime Northern California official, gets his credit in the face of the attention and martyr status Milk received since he was the first openly gay elected official in the United States.

"One interesting reaction is that in a lot of the hoopla about Harvey Milk, the people close to Moscone are starting to speak up and say he was a marvelous mayor and an important figure in California who was kind of forgotten," Bushee said.

In addition, the Chronicle is posting several image galleries of photos, video from reports at the time of both incidents, and front-page reproductions.

1/5/2009

'SF Chronicle' Three-Day Package Ma...

Meanwhile, non-Chronicle reporters who covered the stories have used this anniversary to offer their memories.

AP scribe Tim Reiterman, an Examiner reporter wounded at Jonestown, wrote a lengthy piece for AP this Sunday, while Fran Dauth, editorial page editor of The Star-Ledger in Newark, N.J., wrote a first-person piece Sunday about handling phone calls on the story as an Examiner Saturday editor.

Dauth's boss at the time, then-City Editor Jim Willse, is currently editor of the Star-Ledger. She recounts how both worked the story.

Willse said he went to Guyana after hearing that Reiterman had been wounded and returned to San Francisco on Nov. 26. The next morning, a newsroom phone call woke him to tell him that the mayor and Milk had been shot.

"The first thought that a lot of people had was that it was related to the Peoples Temple," Willse recalls. "But we found out it was something else."

Joe Strupp (jstrupp@editorandpublisher.com) is a senior editor at E&P.

Links referenced within this article

jstrupp@editorandpublisher.com

<http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/mailto:jstrupp@editorandpublisher.com>

Find this article at:

http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003891685



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Uncheck the box to remove the list of links referenced in the article.

2008 Nielsen Business Media, Inc. All rights reserved.