

City Weekly

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE, SEPTEMBER 7, 2003

ROXBURY

Troubled life ends in field

Addict, 24, is seventh homeless person to die in Boston this year

By Ric Kahn
GLOBE STAFF

For more than a month his body remained on ice, unclaimed, in the morgue. Florencio Santiago's lot seemed much the same when he was alive: To Bostonians passing by in a blur, he was often the nameless face of this city's vagabond street people.

He operated so far below the radar that even many of the people he encountered after his scamps — lawyers, advocates for the homeless — were not aware that he was found dead in late July in a field on the Jamaica Plain-Roxbury border. A syringe was by his side.

The Puerto Rico-born Santiago, 24 and frail, was the seventh of eight homeless people to die on the streets of the city so far this year, according to the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program. The cause of Santiago's death has not yet been determined, pending the results of toxicology tests.

When Santiago was free of drugs, he could be a delight, said Benny Benitez, now working at the Massachusetts Avenue detox center of CAB Health & Recovery Services. Santiago would interpret and advocate for other Latinos trying to get clean, he said.

"A real beautiful person," said Benitez, 39. "You need something, he's there for you."

Benitez said Santiago struggled to stay clean, caroming from one detox clinic to another, and records show he held down a job as a cashier at a New Hampshire supermarket.

Benitez added, however: "When he's on drugs, he's... a different person."

Then, court records show, Santiago was

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ROXBURY

Prostitution rise fought

Dear John: Councilors want to hike your fines

By Sasha Talcott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

It was supposed to be a wedding rehearsal, but prostitutes outside Hector Pina's restaurant accosted the guests with offers of drugs and sex.

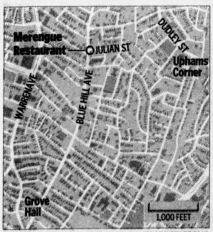
To Pina, it was the last straw. "I couldn't take it anymore," said Pina, owner of the Roxbury restaurant Merengue, who called police to crack down when the problem peaked earlier this summer. "I said, 'I'm losing my business. I've worked all my life for this. I want to take this neighborhood back.'"

He had watched across the street as the women stopped traffic along Blue Hill Avenue to offer their services at all hours, drinking from liquor bottles concealed in paper bags.

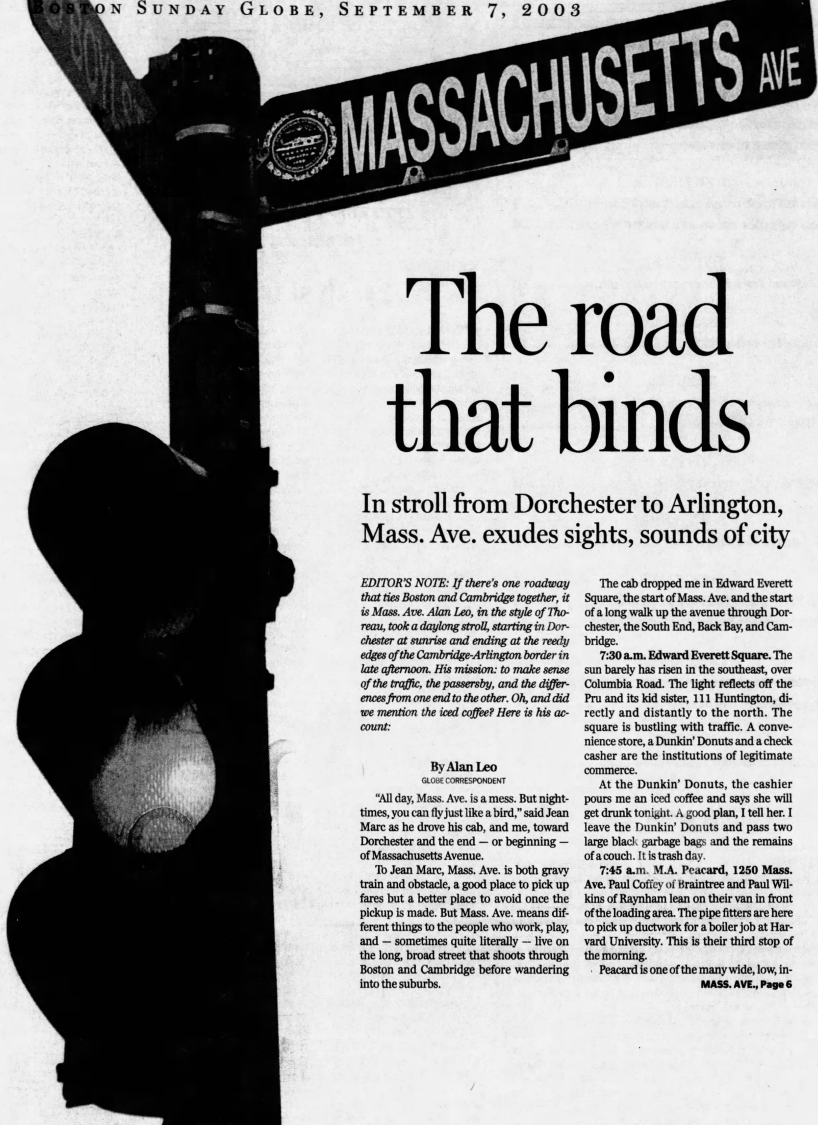
If a city councilor gets his way, Pina and other neighborhood residents could have greater recourse.

Residents along Blue Hill and Dorchester avenues say they have seen a spike in prostitution in the past few months. In a National Neighborhoods Week survey in June, Dorchester residents listed prostitution as the neighborhood's number one

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GLOBE STAFF MAP



The road that binds

In stroll from Dorchester to Arlington, Mass. Ave. exudes sights, sounds of city

EDITOR'S NOTE: If there's one roadway that ties Boston and Cambridge together, it is Mass. Ave. Alan Leo, in the style of Thoreau, took a daylong stroll, starting in Dorchester at sunrise and ending at the rocky edges of the Cambridge-Arlington border in late afternoon. His mission: to make sense of the traffic, the passersby, and the differences from one end to the other. Oh, and did we mention the iced coffee? Here is his account:

By Alan Leo
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

"All day, Mass. Ave. is a mess. But tonight, you can fly just like a bird," said Jean Marc as he drove his cab, and me, toward Dorchester and the end — or beginning — of Massachusetts Avenue.

To Jean Marc, Mass. Ave. is both gravity train and obstacle, a good place to pick up fares but a better place to avoid once the pickup is made. But Mass. Ave. means different things to the people who work, play, and — sometimes quite literally — live on the long, broad street that shoots through Boston and Cambridge before wandering into the suburbs.

The cab dropped me in Edward Everett Square, the start of Mass. Ave. and the start of a long walk up the avenue through Dorchester, the South End, Back Bay, and Cambridge.

7:30 a.m. Edward Everett Square. The sun barely has risen in the southeast, over Columbia Road. The light reflects off the Pru and its kid sister, 111 Huntington, directly and distantly to the north. The square is bustling with traffic. A convenience store, a Dunkin' Donuts and a check cashier are the institutions of legitimate commerce.

At the Dunkin' Donuts, the cashier pours me an iced coffee and says she will get drunk tonight. A good plan, I tell her. I leave the Dunkin' Donuts and pass two large black garbage bags and the remains of a couch. It is trash day.

7:45 a.m. M.A. Peacard, 1250 Mass. Ave. Paul Coffey of Brattree and Paul Wilkins of Rayham lean on their van in front of the loading area. The pipe fitters are here to pick up ductwork for a boiler job at Harvard University. This is their third stop of the morning.

Peacard is one of the many wide, low, in-

MASS. AVE., Page 6

'Boston you're my home'

By Emily Sweeney
GLOBE STAFF

I will never move to Cambridge.

Not that there's anything bad about the place — I just prefer Boston's side of the Charles River and one neighborhood in particular: Dorchester, where I was born and raised.

I wear my pride on my back, literally. I have a "Dot Rat" tattoo permanently emblazoned across my shoulders.

As a kid growing up in Fields Corner, I went to Boston schools and never met anyone from Cambridge.

My friends and I were occupied with rivalries with other Boston neighborhoods. We played hockey against Charlestown and South Boston and held heated debates on which part (or parish) of Dorchester was more fun.

I never experienced any competition with my Cantabrigian peers, perhaps I was too busy arguing why Dorchester rules over Southie.

I did acknowledge our neighboring city's existence, of course, when I'd make fun of my Boston accent, saying "Pahk the cah in Hahvad Yahd." But I rarely ventured over there. And when I did, I surely did not drive. Everyone knew that parking is hellish in Harvard Square, a fact that made the tired accent-cliche even more ridiculous.

I started paying more attention to Cambridge after I graduated high school. I stayed in Boston and went to Northeastern University, while my classmates traveled to other cities and bucolic cam-

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No snob me. I just don't live on the 'B' side

By Johnny Diaz
GLOBE STAFF

Nobody's ever accused me of affected, high-pedigree, stiff-upper-jaw speech.

No, I'm not just back from Oxford or an Ivy League reunion. Amid a sea of crimson shirts at my health club, I wear my Florida International University T proudly. Yeah, it's a state school — and what's wrong with that?

But — and this is an issue with some of my friends — I do live in Cambridge.

Worse, I like it. When I let on that I live there to people across the river, you know, the "B" side, I seem to get this uncomfortable silence. I can hear folks thinking: "Oh, I didn't know you were snobby."

Some venture: "Why not the South End or Dorchester?"

So I tell them, "What's wrong with living in the People's Republic of Cambridge?"

When I landed a job here from my hometown of Miami Beach, I looked for apartments in Cambridge and Somerville. Many moons ago, I spent a summer here in this newspaper as a Features intern and I was charmed with Porter Square and the shoe-box-size room in the apartment I shared with other interns.

At night, I would cycle to Bertucci's and Grendel's in Harvard Square and Paradise club in Central Square on my Sears-brand mountain bike I bought at the CambridgeSide Galleria Mall.

CAMBRIDGE, Page 11

What do you think?

Which side of the Charles is better? Why? Let us know in 75 words or less at ciweek@globe.com. Include your name, neighborhood, and a daytime phone number.

Inside Today

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Addict's life ends in field

HOMELESS DEATH

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like a Zelig with a hairyzeitgeist, popping up in all the wrong places.

He was a spectre on subway platforms, looking to pick a pocket.

In April, records show, Santiago allegedly pushed a woman at the New England Medical Center T stop, and grabbed \$40 from her purse. Police said they also caught him with a homemade crack pipe.

He was the outlaw on the streets of the South End, eyeing car stereos.

Police said that in '01 he was with two others when one broke into a red Volkswagen Jetta and stuffed the stereo into Santiago's blue backpack. Plainclothes police on patrol arrested Santiago, and he was sent to jail, court records show.

He was the drug desperado, prowling Park Square for a high as couples went out to dinner.

Undercover police on assignment watched Santiago make a \$20 buy in '01, records show. As they approached, he ran off in his

white sneakers and tossed away the goods: a plastic bag of crack, and a pipe fashioned from a plastic nit bottle of vodka.

Santiago was convicted and sentenced to time served of 45 days.

He was portrayed as the cheery drug dealer, allegedly operating a side business as nightclubbers reveled in the Theater District.

Police said that when an undercover officer asked Santiago to sell him a \$20 bag of crack last week, Santiago answered he only had 40s. So, records show, Santiago put the rock of crack in his mouth, and bit it in half. Then, he allegedly handed the undercover officer the mini-sized crack for \$20. The officer then arrested Santiago, but the case was later dismissed.

He was part of the crew that congregated outside the doorway of Boston Medical Center, blocking the way into the hospital.

Police said Santiago approached a Milton man outside the hospital last year, and asked him if he wanted to buy. After a walk into the neighborhood, San-

tiago took \$20 from the man, and passed him a folded dollar bill containing a brown powder believed to be heroin, court records show. Santiago allegedly told the man to stash it in his sock.

After he was arrested, record show, Santiago told police he was not selling drugs — and technically he was right.

After testing, the powder came back negative.

So, police charged Santiago with selling spurious smack.

Charges related to that sale and others related to the subway incident were still pending when police responded on July 24 to a call for help for Santiago, who was down in a reedy area behind an industrial stretch of Amory Street.

Like a homeless Houdini, Florencio Santiago often returned from the brink, sometimes reappearing on the street as Santiago Florencio.

The last time, however, he was found in the grass without shoes — or a pulse.

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New fines proposed to curb streetwalkers

PROSTITUTION

Continued from Page 1
problem, above drug dealing and job opportunities.

Neighbors along the two thoroughfares say prostitutes linger outside stores, soliciting customers on their way out. Other men don't need to be solicited. Johns cruise slowly through the streets, leering out their windows and propositioning any woman who walks by. Neighborhood children, riding the bus on Blue Hill Avenue, point out the prostitutes that they pass.

"We deal with this every day," said Jorge Martinez, who leads a neighborhood coalition that calls itself Project Right Inc. This is an issue along Blue Hill Avenue from Dudley Square as far as Mattapan.

Members of the Boston City Council have become so concerned that they have proposed a crackdown on the men who solicit prostitutes.

Councilor Chuck Turner wants to add civil penalties to current criminal penalties on Johns and use the additional fines to fund prostitution prevention programs. Under the proposal, a man arrested for soliciting would pay at least \$700 and up to \$1,050 for his first offense and up to a year in jail. Judges now can impose a \$500 criminal fine and a year in jail, but there is no minimum penalty, Turner said.

According to police statistics, Boston police last year arrested 33 men and 401 women for soliciting.

Several city councilors already have signed on to the prostitution ordinance. In addition to raising fines for the first offense, the proposal seeks to raise penalties on repeat offenders — up to \$3,000 for third-time Johns.

"It's not just happening in Dorchester. This is happening in all our neighborhoods," said Councilor Maureen Feeley, who supports the proposal. "We have for too long allowed this situation to creep from the alleys and backs of buildings into the neighborhoods."

The council has not yet scheduled hearings on the ordinance, originally co-sponsored by Turner, Felix Arroyo, and Charles Yancey. But if passed, the measure would head to the state Legislature for

approval. Boston needs state approval to raise most fees and taxes.

But for one John, even the threat of hefty fines was no deterrent against the allure of sex.

One night in the city's adult entertainment district, the man, a middle-aged tourist who said he was from Trinidad, looked hungrily at a waitress prostitute with matted hair loitering across the street. He said the concierge at the Hyatt Regency had sent him to Chinatown to fill his empty bed.

"I want to see the ladies of the city," said the balding visitor, with thick dark hair erupting from his chest, who said he would gladly risk jail for the experience. "There are lots of beautiful ladies out there."

Nationally, other cities have gone even further in targeting prostitution's customers, a significant change for the world's oldest profession. In Miami, city officials put the names and faces of Johns on billboards, hoping that public humiliation would succeed where prosecution failed. In Denver, a cable television station runs the names of Johns. In several California cities, police impound the cars of men caught soliciting.

To the prostitutes' advocates, Boston's focus on the demand makes sense. "The Johns get a slap on the wrist, and the women are victimized again," said Denise Williams, who became a prostitute at 13 and now passes out condoms and advice on the streets with a group called the Bandeli Project. "Some of these women have been out for days. They're tired. They want to go home, and they can't."

In Boston, police agree that prostitution is on the rise outside downtown. Captain Al Goslin, whose B-2 district encompasses Roxbury and Mission Hill, said the problem is difficult to contain. If police crack down on prostitution in one area, he said, they often find that it has moved elsewhere.

"It's a concern," said Goslin, who said police are doing their best to keep prostitution out of residential areas. "It's not falling on deaf ears here. We want to respond as best we can."

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Mayor joins bed bug fight

While city residents rubbed their eyes on the last lazy morning of Labor Day weekend, Boston's newest tenants rolled into Allston-Brighton. College upperclassmen lugged couches and bed frames into off-campus apartments, but when they turned their new keys and pushed open the doors, many were greeted by trash, unpainted walls, and scratched floors. Some found previous renters who had yet to move out and bed bugs with no plans to leave.

Last week, the department issued more than 215 trash citations carrying fines of several hundred dollars each and hundreds more citations for sanitation violations as a part of the second annual Operation Trash Turnover.

"We need to make a better first impression," said Menino, who joined part of an inspection motorcade on Monday.

As the mayor and press entourage ascended the stairs to student Francesca Ferrante's apartment, Ferrante shut her bedroom door quickly. "My underwear is all over the bed," she said. Her fellow-student neighbors and their families seemed surprised, but pleased, that their call to the inspectors warranted a visit from the mayor.

In an effort to contain recent bed bug problems in Allston-Brighton, inspectors passed out fliers to students stressing they should not take used furniture off the street.

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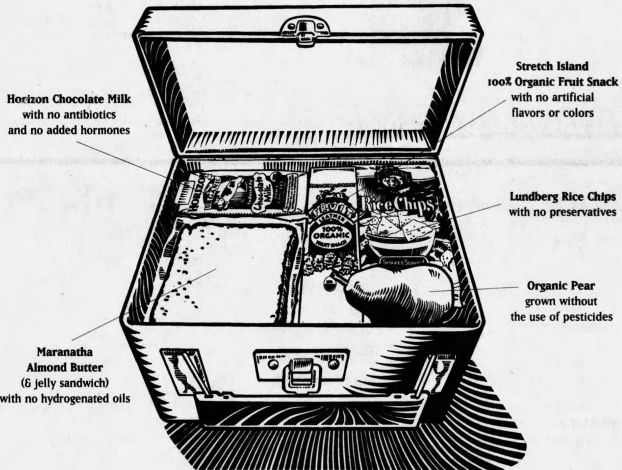
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