



Mark Allen Bell

January 5, 1963 - February 11, 2021

Mark Bell Obituary

Mark Allen Bell 58 of Sacramento, Ca. passed away suddenly on Feb 11, 2021. He was born January 5, 1963 in West Lafayette, Indiana. Mark was a published author and accomplished artist and poet. He loved his cat Li'l Mister and his writing. He was preceded in death by his mother Alice and his sister Linda. He is survived by his father Russell, brothers Jeffrey and Mike and his sister Dorene Abel and many nieces and nephews.

By vocation, Mark was a fry cook, a skill of which he was most proud. He worked for many years with in-house cafes located in capital area government buildings. His true calling, however, was as a writer, particularly of poetry, and as a skilled artist and caricaturist.

In 2004 his life took a series of downturns, losing his friend and roommate to liver cancer, his apartment, and his job in the California budget crisis, and to the recession. He found himself homeless, sometimes in tents, sometimes not, and it was this experience that changed his life forever.

In 2013 several people from the arts community discovered Mark through a column about him in the Sacramento Bee that featured his poetry. The director of the Sacramento Public Library had an outreach program for fresh voices in the arts, and with the backing of new fans. Mark published his first book, *The Hobo Speaks*. His poems spoke to lives thrown away, to life on the streets, to darkness but also to hope. It was a powerful testament to the human spirit.

A friend gave him a used notebook laptop, and he was able to keep writing, though he always preferred first drafts in pen and paper. He presented his poetry via readings, online, and in the occasional printed version.

The glory did not last. While camping along the American River Parkway, the park police raided his tent, destroyed all copies of his book, and tossed his beloved companions, three generations of cats, into the weeds. Mark never recovered any of them. He grew dispirited and isolated, began drinking, and was losing hope. Then in 2014, cold, wet, and desperate, he turned up at a nearby house in Sacramento's Midtown area that had sheltered another homeless friend, and he obtained safe space in the backyard that he inhabited for three years.

During that time he stopped drinking, got himself on housing lists since he was becoming increasingly disabled, and eventually obtained a small but

attractive apartment. He was adamant that wherever he went, he needed a place for the new homeless cat he'd adopted, Li'l Mister. That dream came true in late 2017, and Mark was able to continue writing as well as to reconnect with family and friends from his life back East. Li'l Mister thrived in the bay window giving him a view of downtown Sacramento. All was well for the homeless duo, man and cat.

Mark's was a small life, but it was a good one. He is remembered by many friends from all walks of life who knew his kindness, his humor, and his talent. He became an advocate for others such as himself – people thrown away without recognition of their abilities and skills. His death has stilled an important creative voice not just for Sacramento but for homeless people everywhere. He will be sorely missed.

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