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Brian Sylvia, 41, East P.A. rent board chairman

Memorial service to be held Saturday for community activist

BY THERESA C. VILORIA
Mercury News Staff Writer

Brian Sylvia was known in the community as an advocate for affordable housing in East Palo Alto.

And that is one of the things people are sure to remember about him at a memorial service Saturday honoring his dedication to the community, especially his service on the rent stabilization board.

His closest friends knew him to be very private. But they fondly recall his ease at friendships, his patience and his love for his 20-pound black house cat, Eddie.

"He absolutely adored that

- **Born:** April 13, 1953, Boston, Mass.
- **Died:** Jan. 1, 1995, San Mateo, Calif.
- **Survived by:** Mother, Lorraine Polk; brother Matthew Sylvia; stepbrother Christopher Montcalm; stepsister, Cathy Sylvia, all of Massachusetts.
- **Services:** Saturday at 1 p.m. in the City Hall Community Room, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto.

cat," said Tom Sagehorn, Mr. Sylvia's friend and co-worker. "I'd just bought a comb for Eddie before Brian died. I know he would have liked it. I'm really going to miss him. Brian was a really sweet guy."

Mr. Sylvia, 41, died at San Mateo County General Hospital in San Mateo on New Year's Day. His health had been failing since 1993 and he was on medical leave from Ampex Corp., where he worked as a mainframe computer

operator since 1985.

At the time of his death, Mr. Sylvia was the senior member of East Palo Alto's Rent Stabilization Board. Initially appointed in 1986, he was re-appointed by each successive city council. He became chairman of the rent board in December 1992.

"It's a tremendous loss for the community because he always put other people's concerns before his own," Sagehorn said. "He had a tremendous amount of community spirit. He was a rare person in that he was concerned even about people who strongly disagreed with him."

Mr. Sylvia's greatest accomplishment, according to board members, was hiring a habitability inspector, who certifies that units under rent stabilization are safe and sanitary. Such a position guarantees a fair return for landlords as well as a livable space for tenants, said William Webster, a member of the rent board.

"The philosophy of the Sylvia rent board was characterized by an active policy of balancing the interests of landlords and tenants," said Webster. "He strove

to heed the spirit as well as the letter of the rent stabilization ordinance — that while tenants should be protected from arbitrary rent increases and evictions, landlords need a fair return on their investment."

Mr. Sylvia was born on April 13, 1953 in Boston. He received an associate degree in political science from Cape Cod Community College in West Barnstable, Mass. At 21 he moved to California and has lived in East Palo Alto since.

His ashes will be laid to rest in the Rose Garden of Woodlawn Memorial Park, Colma.