



## Bridge Rail Foundation Newsletter

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### Stop the Suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge

Spread the word—send this on to a friend.

**December 2008**  
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Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to report significant progress in our efforts to stop suicides at the Golden Gate Bridge. This year—as many of you know—the bridge district voted to support a suicide safety net as the preferred option to finally bringing this local tragedy to an end.



This important first step was no accident or expression of spontaneous good will. We made it happen. All of us worked hard to turn around a public agency that has for 70 years been blind to the tragedy it regularly witnesses.

I am particularly proud of the substantial contribution Bridge Rail Foundation has made to this effort. This year alone, the foundation keep the story alive in the press, galvanized citizen response to the District's proposals, organized testimony and public speaking events and ensured the voice of survivor families was heard loud and clear.

And we need to keep it up. Next year a final EIR on the net proposal will be up for approval, and we must secure funding. In addition, there are other public agencies that will have a say in the project. And citizen understanding of suicide and why a net on the bridge is needed remains weak. We need to keep the story alive and continue pushing to end this tragedy.

In order to keep it up, we need your help. While volunteers did all of Bridge Rail Foundation's work this year, there were still expenses. And next year—2009—is the most important year in this fight. Please [Click Here](#) to send what you can today.

Thank You  
Kevin Hines



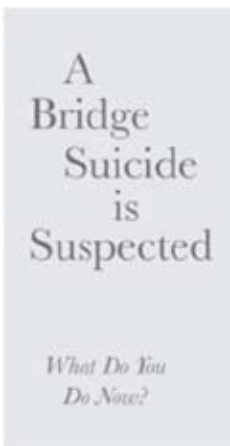
### Financing the Net

A committee of BRF board members will soon meet with GGB officials, other advocates and state representatives to pursue funding for the suicide safety net. Following this meeting we anticipate a coordinated effort to fund the project. More details should be available in the next BRF newsletter.



### Whose Shoes? Coming to the Presidio

Negotiations are underway to bring the *Whose Shoes?* exhibit to the Thoreau Center in the Presidio for a six week display. This indoor display will again feature shoes from every walk of life and represent the over 1,300 lives lost at the Bridge. Last fall BRF launched a very successful exhibit at AFSP's Walk Out of Darkness. Bridge Rail volunteer Joanie Boyle coordinates the project. Our January newsletter will confirm the display dates and discuss the official opening of the exhibit.



### "A Bridge Suicide is Suspected"—Brochure reprinted

Earlier this year BRF produced a small brochure for families facing a suspected Golden Gate suicide where no body has been recovered. The publication, initiated and led by Dayna Whitmer, was intended for the California Highway Patrol and GGB security staff who often face very difficult questions from grieving family members. Since publication, all copies were distributed to the CHP, GGB staff and the Marin Coroners office. However, a reprint was necessary as we have received additional requests from several VA facilities and suicide counseling organizations.

### The First GGB Death

The first known suicide from the Golden Gate was Harold Wobbler in late July of 1937. However, he may not have been the first death after the bridge opened. Press clips from the *Oakland Tribune* dated June 13 and 18, 1937 indicate that Henry Clay Torrence of Richmond jumped or was thrown from the bridge. His body was recovered at Angel Island on June 12 with trauma associated with "having struck the water with a terrific force". There is no reference to any witnesses and the report does not answer the question of murder or suicide. Thanks to Dayna Whitmer for the research.

### Compassionate Friends

Erica Brooks reports that she plans to attend the Compassionate Friends annual candle lighting service for families grieving after the death of a child. The event this year is December 14. There are multiple locations throughout California. For locations and times, [Click Here](#).

### Help Us Fight to Raise the Rail

**Volunteer**—Click [here](#) to send us a note.

**Request a Speaker**—Click [here](#) to tell us of a venue for a speaker.

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