

{ Who are the people you see every day? }

People We See

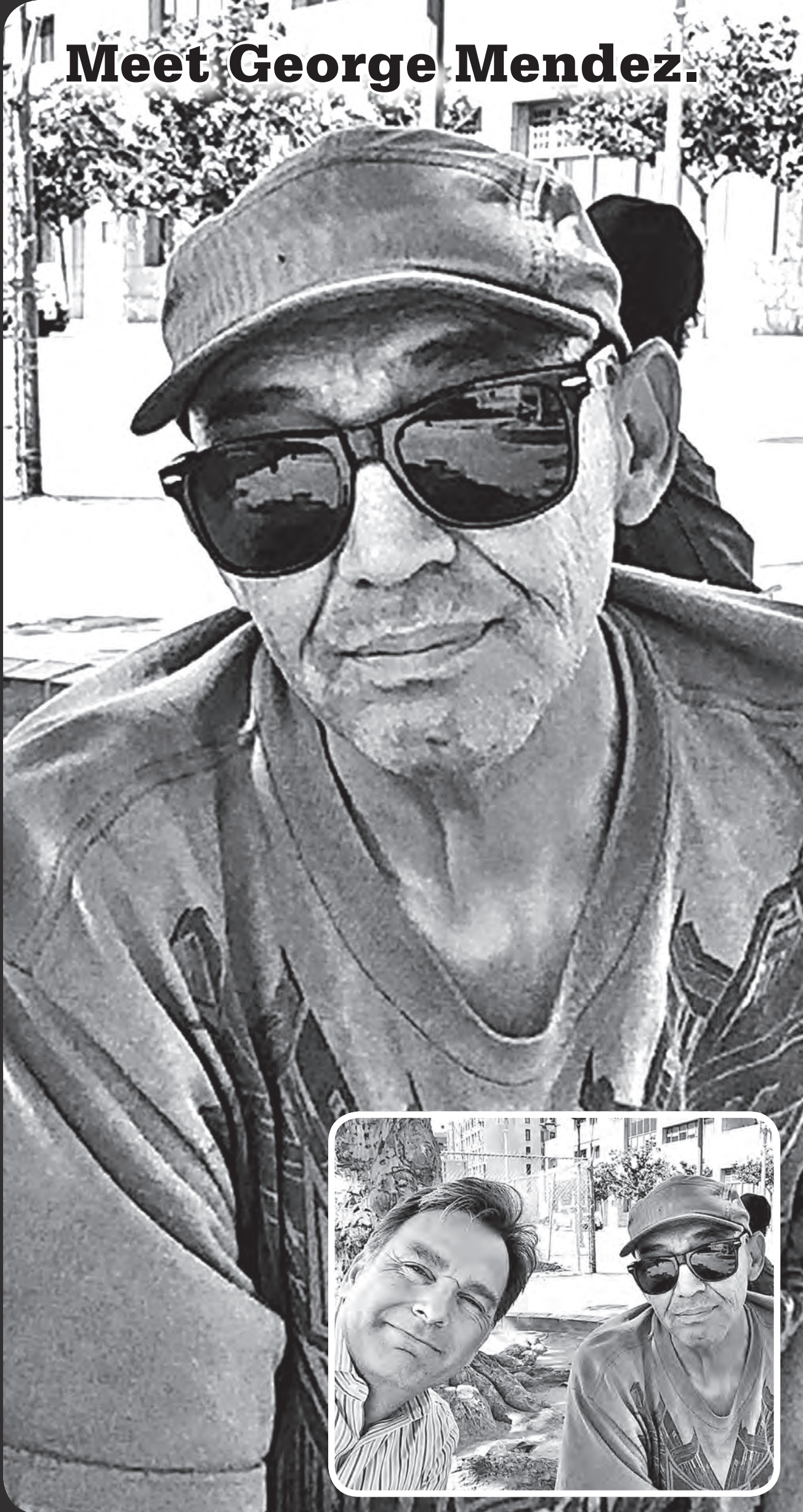
Shelterless in Los Angeles.

Sponsored by:
Terry Yeager and Associates

No. 77
in a series.



Meet George Mendez.



AGE: "I'm 57."

BIRTHPLACE:

"Chillán, Chile – you know the place where the world famous Super Smash Bros. player is from, Gonzales 'ZeRo' Barrios."

MARITAL STATUS: "Divorced."

FAMILY: "I have two older sisters."

PARENTS STATUS:

"My dad passed away 15 years ago."

FAVORITE MEMORY:

"When I was around 10 I remember moving into a new house that my dad bought. It was amazing; it was brand new and big. It's a great memory."

EDUCATION:

"I almost finished school in Chile, but I came to America before I could."

MILITARY SERVICE: "No."

SPORTS: "Absolutely – soccer all the way!"

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

"On the streets, or Dolores Mission."

WHEN MOVED TO LA: "When I was 20."

FAVORITE PLACE IN THE CITY: "MacArthur Park, even though that's where my life went downhill; I still like it. And it's really been cleaned up. It's very nice now."

RELIGION: "No, but I do believe in God."

MEDICATIONS:

"Yes, for asthma, scoliosis, hepatitis C and schizophrenia."

YOUR STORY:

"My father moved me from Chile to America when I was 20. This was about five years after Pinochet took over in his CIA-backed coup d'état. Young men my age were at high risk. The new government under Pinochet was very harsh — many people disappeared if they didn't agree with him — mass killings and such. I remember when I was about 16 I witnessed a scene I will never forget. I couldn't be seen but I saw the military separate the young men from the women and children. The young girls were sent off to the military to be sexually used and young men were taken and shot. My dad sent me to America to protect me. And for 35 years I did well. I worked in construction doing everything — electrical, tile, building, plumbing, you name it. I even got married and had a daughter. She's married with a child now. But, then it all went bad for me when I was arrested in MacArthur Park for having marijuana. The LAPD busted me in an undercover sting. I spent two years in prison out of a four-year sentence. It broke me. When I got out my life was over. It's been seven years on the streets just trying to survive."

FAVORITE MOVIE: "Midnight Express."

FAVORITE TV SHOW:

"Jerry Springer, back in the day."

FAVORITE ACTOR: "Clint Eastwood."

FAVORITE FOOD:

"Carne asada and vanilla ice cream."

FAVORITE CANDY: "Caramel."

FAVORITE MUSIC: "Progressive rock."

LAST JOB:

"I spent 35 years in construction."

LAST THING EATEN:

"I had breakfast at Dolores Mission – frijoles, rice, ground beef and bread."

MOST PRIZED POSSESSION: "My toothpaste, toothbrush, skin cream and medications ... oh, and fresh socks."

IF YOU WERE MAYOR: "That's a tough question. The homeless situation is very complicated; many will never be off the street."

ADVICE FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE: "Work hard, work serious. Take your job serious and do the best you can."

The Club gave George a Bucket and a Blanket, a toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, two pairs of socks, shampoo, hand wipes, some food, \$20 and bottled water.

The interview, conducted by John Hawkins, took place Sept. 22 downtown. Photos by Angel Gomez.

{ In this monthly feature, Club CEO John Hawkins, and Director of Sales Angel Gomez, introduce you to people you see every day, but you might not know who they are. The Club reminds you that we all have names and stories to tell. }