



Duane "D.J." Jones

May 15, 1935 - April 3, 2023

Duane "D.J." Jones, 1935-2023

With family by his side, longtime Santa Barbaran Melvin Duane Jones passed away peacefully April 3, 2023, following a short illness. He was 87. A loving father, a successful businessman and an accomplished mountain climber who scaled high-altitude peaks well into his 60s, Duane (AKA "D.J.") was known for his strong work ethic, passion for the outdoors, love for sharing baked brownies and knack for making lasting friends wherever he ventured.

Duane's core values were formed at a young age. Born in San Bernardino May 15, 1935, he moved to Santa Barbara with his family in the late 1940s. By the time he was in his early teens, he routinely worked after school and on weekends to help make ends meet for his family. He delivered newspapers for the Santa Barbara News-Press—earning the distinction of Paperboy of the Year circa 1950—and worked at Castagnola's Lobster House until the offer of a 10-cent pay-raise lured him to Foster's Freeze at the corner of Milpas and De la Guerra in 1951.

After graduating from Santa Barbara High School in 1953, Duane maintained a steady presence at Foster's Freeze and, after hours, fine-tuned his bowling skills. At the Semana Nautica Festival in July 1955, he was a four-time champion, winning the men's singles at the Barbara Bowl, and men's singles,

mixed doubles (with Mae Coddington) and cash singles at the Figueroa Bowl.

Two months later, Duane entered the U.S. Army. After completing basic training at Fort Ord and additional training in Texas, he was stationed in England, where he took the opportunity to travel around Europe. Honorably discharged in July 1957, he returned to private life, briefly attending junior college and working in the Modesto region before returning to Santa Barbara and his job at Foster's Freeze. He enrolled in courses at Santa Barbara City College, where he also participated in track and field, basketball and a little football.

Duane's career in the fast-food business took hold when, in 1958, he assumed the lease to Foster's Freeze and became its franchise owner two years later. In 1963, he acquired both the underlying and adjoining commercial properties on Milpas St.

Before long, Foster's—a daily staple for neighbors and teens attending the nearby junior high and high schools—was operating smoothly. So Duane turned his sights to Goleta, where land was plentiful and affordable, and growth was promising. Undeterred by risk, he bought property at 140 North Fairview Ave., where he built from the ground up his namesake restaurant, DJ's Drive-In. Opening in October 1965, DJ's, with its signature charburgers and milkshakes, proved to be a popular stop for Hwy. 101 travelers (including Ronald Reagan) and the rapidly growing number of area residents.

North Fairview would soon become a thriving business district. Duane helped lead the charge as president of the Goleta Valley Chamber of Commerce in 1966. In Santa Barbara a year or two prior, he was named Outstanding Young Man by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he was also active in civic causes involving the YMCA, Santa Barbara City College and The Child's Estate (now Santa Barbara Zoo), of which he was a

lifetime member.

Increasingly, he was able to put work aside and spend more time in the outdoors. He enjoyed golf and alpine skiing, and, by the early 1970s, was a frequent backpacker in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, particularly in the Yosemite region.

Duane's high-country exploits quickly evolved to full-scale mountain climbing. His greatest mountaineering accomplishment came in the mid-1970s, when he and his party reached the 20,310-foot summit of Alaska's Mt. Denali, the highest peak in North America and among the most isolated on Earth. He summited other peaks including Mt. Rainier and Mt. Hood in the Pacific Northwest, and Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

When he wasn't climbing he was trekking, often internationally. He explored the Himalayas, the Alps, Torres del Paine National Park in southern Chilean Patagonia, and the mountain ranges of New Zealand's south island. Enamored by the island's beauty and its people, he moved to the Kelvin Heights peninsula in Queenstown where, over 18 years, he built three homes with commanding views of Lake Wakatipu and the surrounding mountains.

He returned to Santa Barbara in early 2020 to be closer to family.

Leading an adventurous life filled with bold pursuits in business and in his leisure time, Duane will be fondly remembered for his love for and loyalty to family, his ambition and many triumphs, and his cherished friendships everywhere.

Duane was preceded in death by his parents, Mark and Margaret Jones, and sister Carol Leader. He is survived by brother George (Ellie) Jones, son Greg

(Elizabeth) Jones, daughter Cheryl Couch, former wife Gail McGrath, former wife Francine Rudesill, four grandchildren—Madeline Couch, Emily Couch, Emma Jones and Hunter Jones—and four nephews and nieces.

A celebration of life will be held at the Palm Park Beach House, 236 East Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara, on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023, beginning at noon.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **30**. 12:00 PM (PT)

Palm Park Beach House
235 E. Cabrillo Blvd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101