



## James Barker Farr

September 18, 1945 - September 20, 2024

James Barker Farr was born on September 18th, 1945 in San Francisco, California, the third child of Barnard Floyd Farr and Jetta Florence Barker. Jim's family moved when he was still quite young to San Jose where his father was in a partnership which owned nine radio stations at its peak. Jim had a carefree childhood and teenage years growing up in San Jose and made many friends with whom he stayed in contact throughout his life. He graduated from Willow Glen High School in 1963 and attended both San Jose State and the University of Arizona at Tucson before settling down and finishing his degree in Finance at Syracuse University in upstate New York. His degree was supposed to be in preparation for working in the family radio business. And even though Jim acquired a First Class Radio and Telephone license at 18, he used it to work at radio DJ jobs and not in the office. After graduation, he decided to travel. He bought a BSA motorcycle in England and rode it throughout Europe for several months getting as far as Istanbul. He then spent a month in Japan travelling solo and later lived on Oahu for over a year doing odd jobs. While in Hawaii, Jim picked up the sailing bug and later crewed on a sailboat from San Francisco to Honolulu. While midway on the sail, he went forward without a lifeline and had to dive off the boat to avoid being hit by the boom. As he used to recount the story, he said he wasn't worried at first when he fell in without a life jacket. But when the boat turned around to pick him up and missed him on the first pass, he started to think about the situation he was in. Fortunately, they got him back onto the boat on

the second pass and the adventure did nothing to diminish his love of sailing.

Finally tiring of the nomadic life, Jim made the decision to go back to school and become a high school history teacher. He returned to San Jose, rented a small dilapidated house on North 15th street with two friends, and started attending San Jose State University to earn the necessary credits. It was in one of those classes that he first met Doreen. After she graduated, they dated for a year and then married in August of 1974.

Over the next three years, Jim finished his history classes, earned a secondary teaching credential, substitute taught for awhile, decided he didn't like it, and then went on to earn a Master's Degree in American History while working at a weekend DJ job. They bought the dilapidated house on 15th Street for \$12,500 and had a house payment of \$105 a month. They put three years' worth of sweat equity into it and then sold it for three times what they paid for it and that was their entry into the California housing market.

In 1977 Jim was accepted into the Ph.D. program in American History at UCSB and the two of them moved to Santa Barbara County for the first time, buying a home on Wagon Wheel Drive in Goleta. They lived there for 6 years while Jim completed his Doctorate, writing his dissertation on Black American Seafarers. His dissertation was later published in book form.

Just prior to meeting Doreen, Jim had been diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease (PKD), a serious dominant gene hereditary disease. Jim would end up working hard every day of his life to manage his symptoms and live a long and productive life. But it did force him and Doreen to choose to either remain childless or adopt children in order to have a family. They chose the latter and were extremely blessed over the next decade to adopt their three sons.

After Jim graduated with his Ph.D from UCSB they moved back to San Jose

so Jim could take up an adjunct teaching position at San Jose State. But Jim's health began to decline resulting in him needing to go onto dialysis for a number of months before having kidney transplant surgery at UC San Francisco with his younger sister as the donor.

The kidney transplant gave Jim a new lease on life and reordered his priorities. He decided against trying to pursue a college teaching position or reenter the family radio business and he and Doreen moved back to Santa Barbara in 1989 to live in an area they had fallen in love with and be closer to some very dear friends. They bought a house on Paseo Cameo where they would spend fifteen happy years.

Jim got a job selling advertising for some local radio stations and made several very good friends from among his coworkers. About a year later an opportunity arose to buy a local Spanish language radio station, KESP. Jim and Doreen formed a partnership with their friend Richard "Chip" Marsh, and bought the station, changing the call sign to KSPE. They also bought a building on Milpas street to house the radio station operations and staff. The partnership would later also buy KBKO, "Radio Bronco", also a Spanish language station. As a part of their outreach to the local Hispanic community, they initiated several community events including the first "Dia de los Ninos" at the Santa Barbara Zoo and a number of festivals at Ledbetter Beach aimed at providing fun events for the local Spanish speaking community. Their partnership was successful for about a decade before Jim and Chip decided to sell the radio stations and retire to enjoy other pursuits.

Jim bought a sailboat at the Santa Barbara harbor and enjoyed many happy days sailing on it, including a long trip to Cabo San Lucas with several good friends. However, after a year he decided he wasn't ready to totally retire and when an opportunity to buy the Goleta Valley Voice newspaper came along,

he took it. A few years prior, Doreen had become involved in local land use issues and thereafter many dinner table conversations had to do with the Goleta area's increasing unhappiness with the County rezoning agricultural parcels in the Goleta Valley for various types of development. Talk of a renewed effort for Goleta cityhood started to gain momentum and Jim and Doreen knew that the Valley Voice could be a powerful tool in that effort. This thought turned out to be prophetic when, against all odds, Goleta cityhood passed on the November 2001 ballot, with the Valley Voice strongly endorsing its passage and when every person the Voice had endorsed for city council was elected.

In 2012 Jim decided to run for his own seat on the Goleta city council. He ended up running unopposed and served for four years, the last year as Goleta's mayor in 2016. That same year he was also honored as Goleta's "Man of the Year" for his many contributions and years of service to the Goleta Valley community.

Unfortunately, despite his care and attention to his health over the years, Jim suffered a debilitating stroke in the summer of 2015 which left him needing the use of a wheelchair. His health issues forced him not to run for reelection as he had hoped to do. He stayed living in Goleta for another five years before relocating to Vista del Monte and the help of their caring staff.

Jim died in the early morning hours of September 21st, passing peacefully in his sleep. He leaves his son Nathaniel Joseph Farr (Karen), his son Richard Daniel Farr, his son Gregory Winslow Farr, his two grandchildren, Joseph Stephen Farr and Zariah Anastasia Farr, his ex-wife Doreen Gama Farr, his older sister Patricia Elek (Joe), his younger sister Nancy Delgado (Max), six nieces and nephews, many cousins and a multitude of friends. He was predeceased by his parents, Floyd and Jetta Farr, and his older brother, Barney Farr. The family would like to express its sincerest thanks and

gratitude to Dr. Darol Joseff who provided over thirty years of excellent care to Jim.

Funeral arrangements will be handled by Welch, Ryce, Haider with interment at Goleta Cemetery.

# Cemetery Details

## Goleta Cemetery

44 South San Antonio Road  
SANTA BARBARA, CA 93110  
(805) 967-3608

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

OCT 4. 11:00 AM (PT)

Welch-Ryce-Haider - Goleta  
450 Ward Drive  
Santa Barbara, CA 93111  
(805) 965-5145  
info@wrhsb.com  
<https://www.wrhsb.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Jim was smart, tough and funny and I thoroughly enjoyed working with him on the Goleta City Council. His contributions to our community were many and he will be missed.*

*Thanks for everything you did Jim*

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**Tony Vallejo** - September 26, 2024 at 07:35 PM



*I was fortunate to work with him and ended up admiring him as an exceptional human being. I pay tribute to his life for everything he did and the positive way in which he impacted the lives of many people who were close to him.*

*Gerardo Lorenz*

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**Gerardo Lorenz** - October 04, 2024 at 02:46 AM