



## Robert Bruce Kieding

March 28, 1937 - February 16, 2026

“Cold waves throw spray into your face as you constantly adjust sails, rigging and a myriad of other gear.... You’re wet to the skin, cold, and suffering from bruises and bleeding hands.... But this really IS fun, and you wouldn’t exchange it for anything!”

-Robert B. Kieding, Scuttlebutt

Robert (Bob) Kieding (88) passed away peacefully at home on February 16, 2026. His most cherished accomplishments included writing his weekly “Scuttlebutt” column for the Santa Barbara News Press, founding the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, and marrying his cherished wife, Joan.

Bob, a lifelong sailor, was born in Evanston, Illinois on March 28, 1937, far from the salt of the Pacific Ocean. His first boating experiences were on Lake Michigan, where he developed a deep-seated fear of boats and water after almost drowning.

In 1946, his father Ray piled the family into a car and headed west, searching for The Perfect Home. He found it: Santa Barbara, California. From age 9, this was Bob’s home, and where his heart was. He attended Peabody Elementary School, La Cumbre Junior High, and Santa Barbara High, where he served as senior class president.

At age ten, Bob assembled and sailed Santa Barbara's first Sea Shell dinghy, and never looked back. By 18 he had earned his first professional command as skipper, managing a yacht crew on weekends and summers, and rubbing elbows with the likes of Humphrey Bogart, David Niven, Dana Andrews, John Ford and Earl Warren. Upon completing college at UCSB, where he met Joanie, he held several on-land jobs, including founding RolAir, a company that used air film technology to reduce friction and allow multi-million pound equipment to be moved with ease.

Bob (affectionately known as "Rapid Robert"), Joanie, and their three children enjoyed many sailing adventures in the Channel Islands. The kids remember Bob racing to the islands, racing to set anchor, and racing back, all while calling out orders to various family members. It was a wonderful adventure that included rowing (no doubt rapidly) to shore, hiking, exploring, and catching all sorts of creatures in their lobster trap.

In 1977 Bob purchased Santa Barbara's primary ship's chandlery, transforming its claustrophobic space into a welcoming harbor business. Chandlery Yacht Sales is still operating today as one of Santa Barbara's oldest businesses, in operation since 1946.

Bob served as president of the Santa Barbara Youth Sailing Foundation, chairman of the Junior Rowing Program for the 1984 Olympics, trustee of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, and president of the Santa Barbara Semana Nautica Sports Festival.

His biggest coup was founding the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. He felt that "the waterfront is Santa Barbara's front porch, and it is inseparable from the heart of the community," and wanted a hands-on museum that would bring it to life. In his later years, he visited the museum on countless occasions, enjoying histories of the Channel Islands, surfing, lighthouses, and multiple

shipwrecks. Many of the artifacts in the museum were donated by Bob.

Bob had a passion for words, his favorite being “sesquipedalian.” One of his proudest moments was when he received a writing award and handshake from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. His weekly Santa Barbara News Press column, “Scuttlebutt,” focused on local history, nautical terms, sailing experiences, and any variety of harbor doings, and ran for many years. The medley of topics that he covered created a rich, three-dimensional view of the harbor.

Bob loved woodworking, travelling, golfing, history, reading, hiking, and family. He was beyond proud of his children and his grandchildren. When recently asked what provided him with pure joy, he responded: “Marrying Joan, and our children.” He will be missed by many. His family wishes him fair winds and an extra-big bowl of chocolate ice cream for dessert.

Bob is survived by his wife, Joan Strand Kieding; his children Ken Kieding (Krista Kieding), Linda Kieding (Michael Kersse), and Susan Kieding Deardorff; his grandchildren Dustin Deardorff, Simon Kersse, Ella Deardorff, Hannah Kersse, Paige Kieding, and Carly Kieding; his sister-in-law Gretchen Kieding, and many nieces and nephews. Memorial service will be private.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to one of the following, both of which Bob held near and dear to his heart:

-Santa Barbara Maritime Museum youth programs: [www.SBMM.org/donate](http://www.SBMM.org/donate)

-Santa Barbara Sea Shell Association: [www.sbssa.org](http://www.sbssa.org)