



Wayne John Hoffman

December 22, 1937 - November 11, 2023

Long-time Santa Barbara resident Wayne John Hoffman, 85, recently passed away in his home, surrounded by loving family.

Wayne was born in Chicago, Illinois, the oldest child of Raymond and June Hoffman, in late 1937. When Wayne was a child, his family moved frequently, but he had strong memories of his time in Santa Monica during World War II, watching the airplanes flying out to sea. Eventually, his family settled in Memphis, Tennessee. There as a young teenager, he met his future wife, Paulette, at a dance class; their fathers worked together at an International Harvester factory. Wayne was a natural athlete, but he particularly excelled at baseball. He went to Christian Brothers High School and played on their team, which led to one particularly memorable event: his team played in a charity double-header, where a young local singer named Elvis Presley displayed his early rock 'n roll talents during intermission. Wayne also played on a Memphis All-Star team, but was injured right before playing an all-star team from Arkansas. One certain player on the visiting team sought out Wayne to chat as he marked the chalk lines before the game: an infielder named Brooks Robinson. Wayne played American Legion ball during summers too, winning the Memphis batting championship in 1954 and playing on the state championship team in 1955.

However, baseball was not his future. He went to college for one year at Southern Illinois University, but returned to Memphis to enroll at Christian Brothers College where he majored in electrical engineering. He courted and

eventually married Paulette in 1960, and soon the young couple moved to Chicago for work. That led to a job in Anaheim, California, where their first son, Andrew, was born. Shortly thereafter, they moved to Virginia, where Wayne worked as a civilian on one of the first nuclear submarines. The couple had their second child, Kathleen (Kay), while in Virginia. He was offered the opportunity to continue working on the submarine for another year, but he declined. Instead, Wayne moved the family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he went to work at Delco.

A colleague and friend convinced Wayne to transfer to the Delco plant in Goleta a few years later. In those days at Delco, Wayne worked in Oceanography, and scuba diving was a frequent part of his job as he worked on underwater test equipment. This job also required travel: he went to Hawaii, Europe, and Alaska, the latter as part of a nuclear test that was being done in the Aleutian Islands. Wayne joined the Goleta Lions Club, which became a focal point of the family's social life.

However, with the draw-down at the end of the Vietnam War, there were fewer government contracts, and the Delco plant in Goleta started to lay off engineers. Wayne was laid off, and at this point made a life-changing decision: instead of hunting for a new job and likely having to leave Santa Barbara, he decided to pursue an interest he had always had, but had never been encouraged to follow – art. As a young child, he had been fascinated by the paintings by Norman Rockwell that were published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Now he seized the opportunity to become an artist himself. He packed up his family, rented out their home, and went to Europe for a year. The family drove a Fiat 124 station wagon (miniscule by American standards), staying in campsites and visiting museums in Belgium, France, Holland, Germany, Portugal, and Spain. Wayne typically made sketches of his subjects, but eventually he started painting, creating a bamboo easel that he strapped to the roof of the car when they traveled. The family got out of campsite living in Spain, renting apartments in Moron de la Frontera (near Seville) and Rincon de la Victoria (near Malaga) for about seven months

during the fall, winter, and early spring, before resuming the camping trips in France, England, and Switzerland. Exactly 365 days after they left, the family returned to Santa Barbara, forever changed by their experiences.

In a stroke of good fortune, Wayne was able to return to work at Delco, the family moved back into their old home, and the children went back to their old school, but nothing was really the same. For Wayne, a new passion, art, had taken hold, and it would dominate much of the rest of his life. He studied art formally at Santa Barbara City College, where he met the artist Ken Nack, who became a close friend as well as mentor and guide for his new vocation. As engineering work became less interesting to Wayne (Delco had shut down its Oceanography operations), art filled that void. He worked in water colors, oils, and acrylics. Over the years, he did still lifes, collages, found art, and pottery, but much of what he did was abstract painting, where his imagination could run wild without being bound with concerns for realism. Color, balance, structure, and even texture were elements that he creatively manipulated. He was influenced by artists such as the French Impressionists and Van Gogh, but his favorite was Cezanne. He resisted questions such as “But what does that mean?” and instead encouraged viewers to just simply experience the art – it didn’t have to mean anything. When he did paint more realistically, many of his subjects were either from his travels or local Santa Barbara sights. He started showing his work at the Old Mission’s annual 4th of July festival, and progressed to having his art shown in galleries locally, in Los Angeles, and in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Travel was another passion. Wayne and Paulette traveled frequently, typically with one big overseas trip per year. They went to Europe many times, but also traveled to South America and Asia. One year Wayne won the Irish Sweepstakes, so he splurged on a trip to India with Paulette. Eventually, Wayne started taking tour groups on trips each summer through an SBCC program, with the purpose of visiting important and interesting museums all over the world.

Wayne was also an avid runner. For years he ran in races, mostly 10K, but he also ran and completed several marathons. He even ran across Ireland one summer with a friend, Dr. Bob Carmen.

As time passed, Wayne wanted to spend more time on his art, so he took early retirement from Delco. Now not only did he do his own art, he started teaching art to others in the Adult Ed program. Between teaching, traveling, and creating his own art, one might imagine Wayne's plate to be totally full. But no, he did more. Wayne and Paulette were long-time parishioners at Saint Barbara's Parish (the Old Mission) where they both volunteered much of their time. Wayne also volunteered at the Braille Institute of Santa Barbara, teaching art such as collage to formerly sighted students and reading art history books to them.

In his retirement, Wayne went in front of the camera for a brief career as a model, appearing in a national print ad campaign for a financial services company – portraying a retired man. Wayne was a voracious reader, often reading several books in the span of a week. Another interest of his was music, both listening and playing. He began to study piano. Wayne already knew how to play guitar, and indeed played in an early rockabilly band while in Memphis. The piano, however, was a different kind of instrument, and he had to learn to read sheet music instead of following chords.

Wayne also was a member of Vistas, where he wrote and acted in presentations about artists. One year he wrote about male artists, and the next year female artists. He would portray the male artist, such as Vincent Van Gogh, Michelangelo, or Paul Cezanne; for female artists, such as Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keefe, and Artemisia Gentileschi, he found women to play their roles, and he would play the part of an interviewer, asking them questions. Health problems eventually came with age. After Paulette's passing in 2021, the problems steadily worsened. Wayne is survived by his sister, Susan Lawler, and his brother Raymond Hoffman, Jr.; his son Andrew, and his daughters Kay and Eileen; and his two grandsons, Sean and Alex Hoffman. A service will be held at the Old Mission at 11 am on Friday, January 19, 2024,

with an open house at Wayne's home following. If you knew Wayne through art or running or work or church or any other way, please come by and share your stories with the family. For more information RSVP to 4Hoffmaninfo@gmail.com.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

JAN 19. 11:00 AM (PT)

Old Mission Santa Barbara
2201 Laguna St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Tribute Wall



“ I was fortunate enough to be the recipient of Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman’s kindness while being the teacher of both Andrew and Kay. Over the ensuing many years since, i have always held the entire family in the highest esteem.

The world is a little emptier with the passing of Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman, but their legacy of integrity and kindness lives on in their children.

William Waxman - December 27, 2023 at 04:08 PM