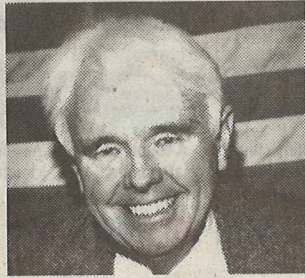


## Melarkey, Patrick Edward

Patrick Edward Melarkey, a beloved father, grandfather, and friend to many passed away peacefully on February 25, 2020 with family by his side in Sacramento, California at the age of 88. Patrick is survived by his children, Sharon (Greg), William (April), Kevin, former wives Barbara "Lexy" (Whitlock) Barrett (Keith), and Jan (Gillam) Melarkey. Patrick is also predeceased by his sisters Barbara Herrero and Margaret Hull. Devoted grandfather to Andrew (Renee) and Stephen Thomas, Mary, Margaret, Kathleen and Elizabeth Melarkey. Also survived by nieces, nephews, cousins and sister in law Norma Whitlock Wilson.



Born November 17, 1931 in Sacramento to Southern Pacific railroad car inspector Edward Warren Melarkey and Mercy Hospital nurse Eunice (Dwyer) Melarkey, Patrick proudly lived independently in the home that he was raised in, up until the time of his passing from natural causes.

Pat would certainly be the first to say, "he had a good run". He is fondly remembered as representing the best of all the good Melarkey family genes — intelligence, humor, compassion, ambition, social activism, extreme generosity, and lots of talking and storytelling. Many stories involved the neighborhood he was raised in and the Sacramento friends and families he grew up with. He was proficient at baseball, basketball (Christian Brothers High School and St Mary's College, Texas) and a sport that was unusual for a railroad car inspector's son in the 1940's: polo. His youth and highly accomplished polo skills led him to state ranking and involved lots of travel for matches up and down the seaboard of California, accompanied by his beloved horse Prince and his loyal coach Merle Foster.

Pat's education started at Newton Booth Elementary School but moved to Immaculate Conception Grammar School under the watchful eye of his mother, who worked in the kitchen to offset the tuition. Pat concluded his K-12 education at Christian Brothers High School (CBHS) where he recently celebrated 70 years as an alumnus. Until just recently, Pat rarely missed the monthly breakfast with his "CB" boys from the class of 1949 at the Pancake Circus, and other CBHS events. After high school Pat meandered from Sacramento City College, to St. Mary's College in San Antonio, Texas, completed Air Force pilot training, returned to Sacramento State College, and concluded at Creighton University School of Dentistry in Omaha, Nebraska in 1961 where he also served as Class President.

Pat was also concerned about the preservation of Sacramento's architectural heritage, particularly of the many Victorian homes in Downtown and Midtown Sacramento. He led the unsuccessful effort to Save the Alhambra Theatre, then located at Alhambra and J Streets.

Pat was an early and energetic advocate of recycling as part of Sacramento County's solid waste management program. After his retirement from the Board of Supervisors, his colleagues on the board named the Solid Waste Transfer Station & Recycling Center on Florin-Perkins Road in his honor.

He remained interested in other county programs, such as treatment for the alcohol and drug dependent, in addition to more broad-based efforts, including those to organize farm workers, and to end the war in Vietnam. He served as Chairman of the Sacramento County McGovern for President Campaign in 1972.

He was also instrumental in the effort to move the Kansas City Kings to Sacramento and served for a few of the initial seasons as the team's dentist.

Further extending himself, Pat became involved in the ownership of a bar and restaurant on Broadway named Melarkey's Place. A popular watering hole for political types and locals, it became a nightclub that launched many great local and national musical talents, and brought to Sacramento numerous other well-known and popular artists.

Among these many performers were folk legends The Kingston Trio, and Glenn Yarbrough of Limelights fame, two of Pat's favorites. The nightclub also featured exceptional jazz performers including McCoy Tyner, Horace Silver, Abbey Lincoln, Billy Cobham, and George Cables. Local favorites receiving a boost from Melarkey's Place performances included Bourgeois Tagg, Little Charlie and The Nightcats, Spydels (Mumbo Gumbo), and Charlie Peacock.

Pat worked as a dentist for 46 years caring for children, the disabled, those with means and those without; he had a captive audience for his storytelling but was always consumed with the dental health of all who came his way. He founded Preventive Dental Systems which included a dental clinic for disabled children and provided dental education and screening for Head Start.

In the 1960s, Pat was drawn into political life by his interest in the provision of medical, and especially dental, care for the poor. He became involved in state and local politics and in 1970, ran against former Sacramento Mayor and four-term County Supervisor Les Wood. In an upset, Pat won the majority in a three way race in the primary, and he was easily reelected in 1974. A vocal advocate of citizen governance and term limits, Pat did not seek a third term in 1978.

During his years as County Supervisor (1971-1979), Pat continued his interest in health care provision. He engineered the sale of the Sacramento County Hospital to the UC Davis Medical School, the first step in the creation of the "Stockton Boulevard Medical Corridor" in ensuing decades.

During these years, with federal funding support provided by the Clean Water Act, Sacramento County led efforts to clean up the water in the Sacramento River. Dozens of antiquated and often inadequate sewer plants up and down the Sacramento River were closed or modernized, and the county coordinated the successful effort to build the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant in Elk Grove.

Pat's other interests included snow skiing trips with his family and friends. He enjoyed the outdoors, and took many camping and fishing trips (often in his beloved 4WD Van) with his children to the wilds of California, Nevada, Colorado, Idaho, Canada, and Alaska. In his later years, Pat became an accomplished horticulturist, growing dahlia and especially amaryllis bulbs. He harvested flowers in their hundreds, which he was always pleased to present to family and friends.

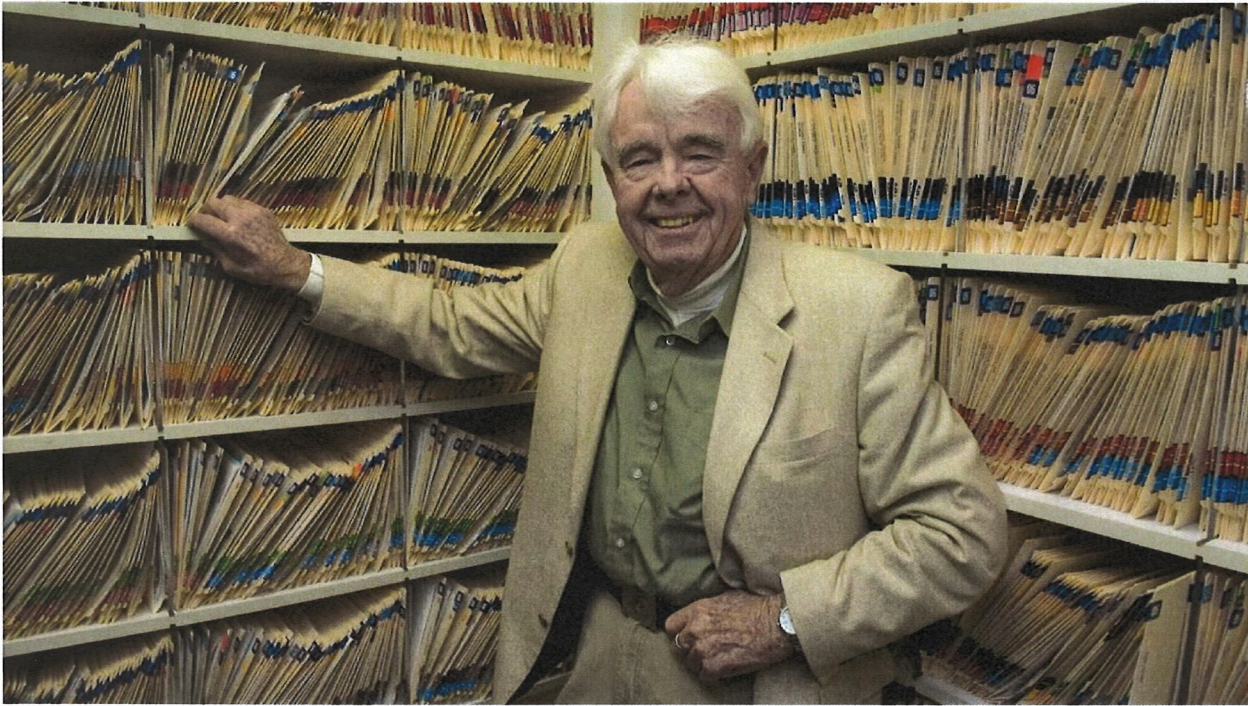
Pat will be genuinely missed by all who loved him. He was always generous and kind and concerned for the well-being of others. The family wishes to thank all those who helped keep Pat socially active in his later years — rides to the Limelight for Kings games, CBHS events, Over the Hill Gang, Truman Club luncheons, and church. Our family is also grateful for the dignified and respectful care given to Pat by Dr. Andrew Factor and the Sutter Hospice team.

We deeply appreciate all the kind words and prayers that continue to help with our healing. Due to the current precautions related to the Covid 19 virus the family will have a memorial service, at a future date, so that we can celebrate together. Please refer to the W.F. Gormley & Sons website for details ([gormleyandsons.com](http://gormleyandsons.com)). If you would like to be contacted personally when details are finalized, please call (916) 813-8553. Interment at St. Mary's Cemetery will be private. Donations in Pat's memory can be made to Christian Brothers High School or to a charitable organization of your choice.

# Another colorful character from Sacramento's past is gone. Go with God, Pat Melarkey

BY MARCOS BRETÓN

FEBRUARY 26, 2020 05:00 AM



Patrick

Melarkey, a dentist, former county supervisor and bar owner, talks in his office in Sacramento on Monday, November 27, 2006. Old timers in Sacramento remember him for his countless contributions to his home town as a member of the board of supervisors, his colorful quotes and his generosity to the poor. Melarkey died Tuesday at the age of 88. RANDY PENCH SACRAMENTO BEE FILE

When I first moved to Sacramento in November of 1989, Pat Melarkey was a big deal. He owned a bar on Broadway called Melarkey's Place. It was directly across the street from the [Tower Theatre](#). It's a Japanese restaurant now, but then? It was right in the heart of an avenue housing Sacramento's classic theater and the still thriving Sacramento business empire of Tower Records and Tower Books.

Melarkey's was packed on Saturday nights and I wish my memories were more vivid but, well, tequila. I went there with other young Bee reporters, of which there were many in those days, although it wasn't until later that I learned how big Pat Melarkey was.

He had been a Sacramento County Supervisor of note in the 1970s. He was a dentist with his own practice who made good money but gave as much or more of it away, even if it was to his own

financial detriment. But Patrick Melarkey was more than that. He had a big spirit, a big smile, a big shock of silver hair, a big heart. For many years he was known by a phrase that has gone out of fashion.

And in the finest traditions of Irish Catholic Americans, Patrick Melarkey gave his heart to the poorest among us. He was known for fixing the teeth of poor people who crossed his path. By all accounts, many of them in the Bee archives, Melarkey did this all the time. And if it doesn't sound like much, consider how much you are charged in your deductible on your dental plan. Or how much you have to pay out of pocket when go for your dental work.

## Opinion

Those deeds faded with the years as Melarkey's generation of Sacramentans began passing away. They faded as he grew too frail to join his groups of friends who used to dine with him every week at Biba. [Biba Caggiano died last year](#). [Lina Fat soon followed](#). All those big names of Sacramento's past are giving way to time, to new generations of capital residents who are remaking the old town and creating new stories, new legends.

It's frowned upon in The Bee newsroom now, but if this were the old days – if this were back in Melarkey's 1970s heyday – I would pull a bottle from my desk drawer and raise a glass to Patrick Melarkey, who died on Tuesday at the age of 88. His funeral arrangements are pending.

## A DIFFERENT TIME IN SACRAMENTO

"He was a true Irishman!" said Dan Visnich, an old pal of Melarkey's and an old political hand from the state Capitol in the 1960s and 70s, when watering holes like Melarkey's and Posey's were the gold standard for gathering places of interesting people who cut deals over adult beverages.

"His family came here from Ireland in the 19th Century. He was a guy who lost a lot of money by helping people, probably died penniless. But he was a wonderful guy. We went to a lot of funerals together for our old friends. We had a marvelous time together and I'm really going to miss him."

A 2006 Bee story described Melarkey's political legacy this way: "Melarkey pushed for the county to sell its financially strapped hospital to UC Davis. He pushed for recycling before hardly anyone had heard of it. He defended the poor, the homeless, and found treatment for chronic drunks.

"In 1971, he urged the county to plan for the closure of Mather Air Force Base – 22 years before it happened – taking heat from almost everyone. He protested the Vietnam War. He was constantly trying to create new public parks. He thought government could fix things.

Seems he was always late, hustling into meetings with a smile and an apologetic shrug. In between, he would frequent thrift shops and stop at every junk pile he encountered."

He graduated from Christian Brothers High School and Sacramento State. When the time came, he avoided the draft for Vietnam. "I was in the George Bush plan," he told The Bee in 2006, poking fun at then President George W Bush, who avoided Vietnam as well. He tried to save the Alhambra Theater and failed. He soaked up life in Sacramento, good times and bad, with good humor.

"He knows the history of Sacramento better than anybody," Monsignor Edward Kavanaugh, director of St. Patrick's Home for Children, told the Bee in 2006. Melarkey visited the children's home on Saturdays to care for the children's teeth for free. "For that I will be eternally grateful," Kavanaugh said.

The venerable Monsignor Kavanaugh died on St Patrick's Day, 2018. And now, Melarkey has gone to join him. And if just for a moment, you could indulge my own Mexican Catholic biases for a moment with this: I hope those two great Sacramentans are together again in that heavenly place we pray for when we are still living.

I hope Patrick Melarkey is free of pain and free to share that big heart with everyone he encounters in the Kingdom of God. And for those of us still here? We can reflect on a life well lived by a man who lived with an open mind and an open heart.

May we all follow that example and never forget the people who tried their best to make this town a better place. Go with God, Patrick Melarkey.

The Sacramento Union

# Sunday Best People

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