



## James E. "Jim" Donahue

June 29, 1931 - October 31, 2023

James E. Donahue "Jim" June 29, 1931- October 31, 2023, Carmichael, California. Loving father, devoted husband, father, "Papa" and dear friend to many, Jim Donahue passed away at the age of 92 during the early morning hours of Tuesday, October 31, 2023, following complications of a stroke and fall. Jim passed peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family.

Jim was born in Webster, South Dakota, on June 29, 1931, as the eldest son of Edmund and Anne (Neuman) Donahue. Jim and his younger brother Dick lived in the town of Webster but spent the bulk of their early childhood growing up on Uncle Eddie's farm just outside of town. Jim learned the meaning and value of hard work at an early age while helping his uncle with chores on the farm. Jim had fond memories of attending St. Otto's Catholic School in Webster, where he also developed a healthy respect (and fear) for the teaching nuns. His experience at St. Otto's served as a foundation for the later Catholic educations of his own sons.

The Donahue family moved from South Dakota to Oakland during WWII, where his father went to work building ships at Mare Island in Vallejo. Jim spent his teenage years growing up in Oakland and attended Saint Mary's College High School as a proud graduate of the class of 1949. During high school, Jim helped out and worked in the family restaurant and soda shop business in Oakland and Berkeley. On a recent visit to his old stomping grounds, Jim was able to visit the inside of the old "Donahue's Restaurant," which is now Sweet Adeline's Bakeshop at 3350 Adeline Street, Berkeley. The

proprietor was kind enough to let Jim go upstairs where he, his brother and parents lived just above the restaurant. That small space is now the bakery office.

As a boy growing up in Oakland, Jim developed a deep love of all sports. He frequently snuck into Oakland Oaks baseball games with his buddies. He once remarked that he couldn't recall any of his pals ever actually buying a ticket. He joined several baseball, softball and basketball teams through the park district and the Police Athletic League. He was a proud member of the Bushrod Bunnies basketball team and had a great outside shot.

Jim attended Saint Mary's College in Moraga, graduating in 1953. He met many life-long friends from his time as a Gael. He continued his love of Gael sports throughout his life and was a staunch supporter of Saint Mary's baseball and basketball.

Two days after graduation from college, Jim reported to the U.S. Army and began training at Fort Ord. During basic training, Jim scored so highly on an intelligence test he was immediately removed from the company and transferred to Fort Holabird, Maryland, for training in the U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence Corp. Following his training, Jim was stationed as an Intelligence Analyst in Japan where he was based with the C.I.C. for the duration of the Korean war. Fortunately, the war was near its conclusion, and Jim finished out his 2-year Army commitment in Japan.

Upon his return to Oakland following his tenure in the Army, Jim met the love of his life, Dolly Lewis. They courted and were married in January, 1956, and spent their honeymoon in a newly opened park named Disneyland. 13 months after their nuptials, Jim and Dolly welcomed the first of four sons. They spent their early married life in the Oakland, Berkeley, Hayward and the Concord East Bay area while Jim worked as a claims adjuster for AAA in San Francisco. During that time, Jim discovered he had a passion for the legal aspects of his work and enrolled in USF law school, attending the night program. With tremendous assistance from Dolly, Jim was able to balance full-time work, law school, and fatherhood to his then 3 sons. Following

graduation from law school and passage of the California Bar in 1961, Jim joined the AAA house counsel office in San Francisco.

Jim, Dolly, and their 3 boys moved to Sacramento in 1964. Soon thereafter, they welcomed their fourth boy into the family. After the move to Sacramento, Jim left the AAA house counsel's office and entered into practice with Douglas B. McDonald in 1964, forming the insurance defense firm of McDonald and Donahue. In 1975, Jim formed the firm of Donahue & Callaham where he mentored many local legal minds and trial attorneys. Subsequently, Jim formed the firm of Donahue, Wood, Bates, Blakemore & Mackey, where he continued to try cases and mentor lawyers for nearly 2 more decades. At its heyday the firm employed 22 busy defense attorneys. Jim remained with the firm until he semi- "retired" in 2012 to work with his sons, Jim and Matt.

Jim was a very proud member of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), which is a well- respected organization made up of highly qualified, civil, and ethical trial attorneys dedicated to preserving the right to jury trial in civil matters. Jim mentored many trial attorneys, and his law firms spawned several ABOTA members.

Jim had a very distinguished legal career as a Sacramento defense lawyer and tried over 200 jury cases in just 62 short years as an attorney. Jim was known for his professionalism, humor, and courtroom demeanor. He had great respect both from and for the bench. He thrived in the courtroom and was a firm believer in the jury system held so sacred by ABOTA. Jim was awarded the Civility Award by the Sacramento Valley Chapter of ABOTA in 2003 in recognition of his highly ethical and civil demeanor with the bench, colleagues, and opposing counsel. He was presented with the Legends of ABOTA Award as one of the initial recipients of that award in 2011, recognizing members with notable and distinguished trial careers. He was honored to be included among that initial class of lawyers, all of whom he tried many cases with and against. Jim loved the law and continued to practice with his boys up to the end. He may well have been the only nonagenarian still taking depositions in the state.

He was beloved by all who knew and worked with him. Around the office he was simply known as “Dad”.

Although his legal career was long and distinguished, Jim’s proudest accomplishment was that of being a great husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Jim dearly loved his wife of 65 years, Dolly, until she passed away in July 2021. Jim and Dolly were inseparable until she departed, leaving him broken-hearted. Together they traveled the world making innumerable friendships along every path they took. He was an amazing father to four sons: Jim (Carrie), Tim (Karen), John (Meagan) and Matt (Tasha). He loved his sons and worshiped his daughters-in-law. He was grandfather “Papa” to Christie Horton (Nick), Kathleen Becker (Nate), Scott Donahue (Alexis), Caitlin Balthrop (Joshua), Matthew, Michael, and Mark Donahue, Nichole Collis (Chris), Stephanie (Nate Brown), Daniel, Nolan, and Dalton Donahue; and great grandfather to Isaac, Jack, and Joseph Horton, Callan Becker, Aria and Isla Brown, and Hazel and Maisy Balthrop. Jim was a frequent observer at any dance recital, play, sporting event, game, or activity in which his children and grands participated. He balanced his legal career and coaching little league for 15 years straight between his four sons. Jim’s love of sports continued to the end. He was an original Raiders season ticket holder from the inception of the team in 1960. He took his family to nearly every home game through the 60’s to early 80’s until the team moved to Los Angeles in 1982. He never forgave that move! He was a staunch A’s fan and traveled to spring training several times with his boys. He and Dolly developed a great affection for Jesuit High School, where they sent their four sons to school. They were active members of the school community and supported many school-related organizations. They regularly opened their home to the Jesuits for family Sunday dinners at the Donahues’. Jim was a true lover of high school sports and attended 100’s of football, baseball, and basketball games at Jesuit. He was a member of the chain gang at Jesuit during the 70’s and loved being close to the action. He continued to attend

football games at Jesuit up until just a few weeks before his passing. Jim was always the consummate gentleman, jokester, and punster. He regularly performed stand-up comedy for friends, family and co-workers at the numerous dinner parties he and Dolly hosted, or at company events. His jokes were a regular feature at office Christmas parties. Jim always had an endless supply of G-rated jokes at the ready. Many were retreads from year-to-year but always funny. Often his punchlines would get trampled on by his own high-pitched cry-laughter, which made them all the better. He was a treat to spend time with, and a magnet in any room he entered. He had a perpetual smile and a twinkle in his eye. His greatest joy was spending time with his wife Dolly and his family, telling jokes and war stories from his amazing legal career, or just soaking in the family moments. Jim will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him, for to know him was truly to love him.

A private family mass and interment is planned for November 9, 2023. Jim will be laid to rest along-side his one and only love, Dolly, at Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery in Lafayette, Ca.

A Memorial Mass and Celebration of Life will be held at the Jesuit High School Chapel of the North American Martyrs located at 4660 Fair Oaks Boulevard, Sacramento, CA. 95864 on December 9, 2023, 11:00 am, with a reception to follow. All are welcome to attend to celebrate Jim's life.

The family has asked that in lieu of flowers, any donations be made to the Jim and Dolly Donahue Memorial Scholarship Fund [click here](#) established at Jesuit High School, 1200 Jacob Lane, Carmichael, CA. 95608, or to any other charity of your choice. Please visit the online tribute at [www.passalacquafuneralchapel.com](http://www.passalacquafuneralchapel.com)

God Bless

Jim, Tim, John, and Matt Donahue, and Families.

# Tribute Wall

BB

“ *Our condolences to the family on the loss of a giant of a man.* ”



---

**Burt Bergida** - December 09, 2023 at 11:40 AM