

Diablo Honors.....

Kay Spicer

Editors note: Kay passed away on March 25th. She approved this article a week earlier. She was so delighted to be honored and to share her story with you.

By Jan Novak

Catherine Drolet and Jim Spicer were both born in Detroit, MI in 1936. In 1975, Kay and Jim Spicer arrived in Diablo and raised their children...and have contributed so much to our community.

Kay and Jim's early lives were on parallel tracks. They both attended Catholic schools and met in high school at mixers for the boys and the girls schools. They then attended the University of Detroit for a couple of years. Jim went off to military service, working for two years as medic. Kay continued to earn her degree in social work and later earned a teaching credential. Along the way, she worked in Registration for the University of Detroit when this guy Jim, who she kind of knew, came to looking to re-enroll at the college. All of the classes were full, but she got him onto a waitlist for a class. He got into that class and eventually completed his degree. Kay claims full credit for that. If you know her, you know she does that with a big smile and a wink. They built on their friendship and eventually romance as Kay had a family car to drive to college and would give him a ride. They married in 1960 and bought their first home in Detroit for \$17,000.



Once Jim completed college, he went to work for General Motors and they began a life together building a family while constantly on the move. They raised four children—Anne, Mary Pat, Christine and Patrick. They moved from Detroit to Winchester VA to Clarkston MI to New Orleans to Jacksonville to San Leandro in 1-2 year stints as Jim climbed the GM corporate manufacturing ladder. When it was time for the next move, Anne was beginning high school. They decided it was time to put down roots for their family. Luckily for us, that happened in California.



When the Spicers moved to California for Jim's work in San Leandro, they drew a circle on the map of suitable homes within a 20-mile circumference. Their criteria were clear and simple. They wanted good schools for their children, great golf and enough room for all of them. Pickings were slim, but they finally bought what Kay calls "a junker of a house" in Diablo with good bones and enough room. That was 50 years ago.

Kay remembers a quieter and smaller Diablo. Shortly after they moved in, they were invited to a progressive brunch that included 50+ neighbors. As she tells it, Jim was amazed that all the guys he met didn't start a conversation with what he did for work, as that was how conversations seemed to start in all of the places they had previously lived. They asked about his interests in golf, tennis, what his kids and Kay might engage in at Diablo—swim team, junior golf and tennis, social events. The questions were about how to welcome and include the family in the community. They had found their forever home.

Jim took a senior position at Wellmade Products, helped build the business and eventually owned it before selling it in 2006. Kay taught 5th, 7th and 8th grades at St. Perpetua in Lafayette and All Saints in Hayward before retiring in 1996.



The family took advantage of everything that Diablo had to offer. Golf and Bridge for Jim. Tennis for Kay. All of the kids were on the swim team. All of the girls played tennis and won the Under 14 East Bay Title. Patrick played golf and worked in the pro shop. And, following in their parents' footsteps, they all attended Catholic schools: St. Isidore's, Carondelet, De La Salle. They rotated hosting big 4th of July parties with their friends and their children's friends. Jim devoted countless hours to Diablo Country Club on committees and the Board of Directors, eventually serving as President of the Board in 1998. In recognition of his service to the club, Jim won the Helfrich Award in 2014. In his spare time, he coached and managed Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) basketball teams at St. Isidore's. After her retirement, Kay took up golf, first with the Holy Niners and then the DWGG, where she served as an officer and won the Nan Steffens award in 2015 for her contributions to the DWGG. She made more friends through her Bridge and Bunco groups. This is one active, athletic family!

Jim passed away in 2022 after 62 years of marriage. Their children remain in the Bay Area. Anne married Dave Poirer. Their children-- Meghan, Nick and Hannah all live in Texas, but Anne lives in Walnut Creek. Mary Pat lives in Alameda. Christine married Mark Vranesh, her boyfriend from high school and lives in Alamo. They have three children—Joe, Matt and Liz. Patrick married Bridget Cavanaugh and they live in Livermore with their two children—Jack and James. They are a very close family.

Kay is a vibrant, funny, smart, interesting and warm woman. She is also an accomplished artist and her beautiful paintings fill her Diablo home.



When asked why she has remained in Diablo for 50 years, her answer was simple. "It's just so friendly!" And although she doesn't know every resident of Diablo as she once did, she has a large circle of long-time friends in the community.



Thank you, Kay, for all that you have done to make Diablo a special place!

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