

## REMEMBERING JACK MERRILL...A MOST DETERMINED MAN

Before he was a resident at The Heritage Jack was a private patient in the Health Center for rehabilitation after knee replacement surgery. He was determined to regain full mobility and to return home to his second story flat. No one worked harder at physical therapy than Jack. If the therapist said to do ten repetitions twice a day, Jack did twenty reps three times a day. Jack soon did recover his mobility. His determination to return to his home was still an issue when our then social worker, Doug Kaplan, assigned Jack to have meals in the resident dining room at a select table.

As Aggie remembers it: "Because Jack was an administrative law judge in the state court system and I had been a court commissioner in state court, Doug thought Jack and I might be able to talk shop, so to speak. Doug hoped we, his table mates, might help Jack's family persuade him to become a resident. Not an easy feat. Jack did enjoy our company, regaling us with tales of his extensive travels with his late wife Ann; his work life and to my delight, talked politics. After three months sharing our dining room table and conversations Jack decided to make The Heritage his home. Meanwhile, we had fallen in love with Jack's six month old grandson Merrill and had become friends with his caring and lovely family."

Stefan, a new resident at the Heritage, was also assigned to the table where Jack had his initiation into our community. Stefan has remained Jack's friend, always ready to assist him onto and off his walker. When Jack was confined to a wheel chair, Stefan wheeled him to and from the dining room and accompanied him on the van to appointments when Jack required an escort.

Jack was a voracious reader. Long after the rest of the residents were asleep, Jack would emerge from Stucky Library heading back to the Health Center after being immersed in a good murder mystery. The Economist, New York Times, Wall Street Journal were his daily bread. Jack had excellent recall. He could quote from recent news events; re-imagine moments in history in great detail; replay scenes from favorite movies, and recite obscure poems about Ghengis Kahn.

As soon as Jack was mobile he walked to the public library. Even when he could not bend one knee he continued to 'walk' to the library inch by inch on his extra tall walker. Once he arrived at the library he had to stand to read and then make the arduous trek back to the Heritage. When Jack was no longer able to go the library Deirdre, John and Chris kept him supplied with reading material. Aggie delivered the N.Y. Times Book Review each Sunday to Jack's room and to Kaiser when he was hospitalized.



Reading was a good escape, but Jack was determined to remain physically active. He made arrangements to have a trainer work with him at the Olympic Club, a place where he had many friends and had worked out for years. The van lift plus Rosebelle's assistance enabled him to be transported to the Club. His transportation was both medical (physical therapy) and social - lunch with friends.

Attending Mass was very important to Jack. A friend picked him up every Saturday evening for services at St. Vincent de Paul until neither Tom nor Jack were able to continue.

Jack kept a jar filled with cookies for his grandson Merrill. This treat became a ritual between Grandpa and grandson during family visits. Merrill became a popular visitor. Jack's comment: "Merrill has 75 grandparents at The Heritage."

Aggie's remembrance: "Jack's zest for life was unmistakable as he battled health issues with all his considerable energy and with the unending help of his devoted family. It seemed that he knew everyone in San Francisco and California state government and in Catholic circles. His ties to his Jesuit schooling carried him to the end of his days.

Doubtless Jack is now enjoying a grand reunion with his wife Ann in the great beyond."

Farewell, Jack. You raised a high bar in your determination to overcome obstacles, remaining emotionally and physically fit against all odds. We miss you!

Aggie Hoff and Eleanor Bissell

