

SAM VAUGHN



Samuel VanCourt Vaughn
10/14/1935 – 2/23/2025

Samuel VanCourt Vaughn lived a life of service and love infused with humor and joy that he brought to those who knew him. He passed peacefully surrounded by his wife of 65 years, Cathee and their daughters on Feb. 23, 2025 at Samaritan Village in their home town of Hughson. Sam was born in Oakland, California to Clyde and Marjorie Vaughn. At the age of 8, he moved to Hughson with his mom and older sister Joan. There were several members of the extended Cronkite family living in Hughson of which they were a part. Sam went to Hughson Elementary School and Hughson High School where he excelled in academics, music, and sports. He attended Modesto JC, receiving an AA degree and then transferred to San Diego State, completing a BA degree in Physical Education with minor in Music. While in San Diego, he met Cathee Foster, and they quickly fell in love.

Sam and Cathee married on June 27, 1959 in the original Hughson United Methodist Church. He finished a three-year stint stateside in the US Army. The last year, they were stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco where Sam worked as a physical therapy aide at Letterman General Hospital. Their first daughter Marjoree was born there in July 1961. They moved back to Hughson soon after. One year and four days after Margee, twins Judith and Janice arrived, and in September 1964, the family was completed with a fourth daughter, Robynn. Cathee remembers that Sam was a great dad, getting up with her for feedings and diaper changes without any complaints. Sam and Cathee added a boy to the family “adopting” Matthew Nicolau as a teenager into the family in the 1980’s. Over the years, their home was opened up to other teenagers and young adults who needed a place to stay during challenging times in their lives.

Life quickly became centered on family and the community. Sam taught math and music at Walter White Middle School in Ceres for a year starting in 1961 before moving into administration, focusing on keeping students in school as the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance. He often took time to make home visits, ensuring that kids had what they needed to get to school.

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New teachers in the district recall Sam taking them on an animated bus tour of the schools in Ceres with his ever-present quick wit and humor. After 34 years of service with Ceres USD, they honored him in 1994 by naming a new school in Ceres, Samuel Vaughn Elementary School.

In the summers, Sam was the director of the Hughson Youth Center community pool, teaching swim lessons and coaching a successful Hughson Swim Team. As a pre-teen he had participated in the digging and building of the pool, over a two-year period, which opened on July 3, 1947. He influenced the lives of many young people throughout the years as pool director. He was also an avid tennis player and passed his skills along to many in the community through lessons to young and old. Sam participated in other community service clubs and activities including assisting Cathee with the Hughson Community Christmas Baskets, Lions Club, Phi Beta Kappa, Big Brothers, Salvation Army, and United Samaritans Foundation. He also volunteered to film the HUHS football games for a number of years. He was a member of Hughson United Methodist Church for most of his life and was involved with the choir which he led for many years. He rededicated his life through prayer to Christ in 2014.

His love of music was important throughout his life. From the time he was in high school until his early 80s, he was a member of various bands and sang tenor and baritone. He played piano, trumpet and other horns, stand up bass, electric bass guitar, and ukulele. Calvin Kindred was a student of Sam's in 7th grade and later became a band teacher in the Ceres schools. Sam and Calvin, and others, formed The Harlan Starr Band which played for many years in the Central Valley and as far away as the Calgary Stampede in Canada. He loved to lead people in sing-alongs with his ukulele at almost any gathering.

Sam loved nature and took any opportunity he could to fish, camp and backpack in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Together with Cathee, they would pack up the station wagon or van and go camping or make the trek to San Diego to visit Cathee's folks. The family loved the beach and swimming in the ocean. He took the three older girls and cousin Kent ages 10 and 11 on a 4-day, 22-mile backpack trip in the summer of 1972, which was quite an adventure. Thirty-eight years later, when Sam was 74, a portion of the original backpack trip was completed with two of the daughters and Matt along with son-in-law Keith, all 6 grandchildren, and a school friend of Sammy's. At age 72, he and Margee along with a few brave others from the HUMC hiked Half Dome led by the pastor Tom Hillman.

Over the years, there were numerous family birthday and special event backyard gatherings with friends and family. He and Cathee were great supporters of their children and grandchildren's music, dance, and athletic endeavors attending their concerts, recitals, games, matches, and meets.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his uncle Verne Schrader, and brother-in-law Joe Russo. He is survived by his wife Cathee Vaughn, daughters Margee Neer, Judy (Harvey) Marable, Janice (Keith) Herring, Robynn Vaughn and "adopted" son Matthew Nicolau.

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His grandchildren include Carlee Herring, Samuel (Ashley) Herring, Marissa (Samuel Hayman), Janae Marable, Isaiah Marable, and Hannah Neer along with Scarlet and Georgia Nicolau, and great grandchildren Brooks Herring and Isla Hayman. He is also survived by his sister Joan Russo and nephews Carl (Leslea), and Kent (Lisa) and their children and grandchildren. There are many others who call Sam Vaughn a part of their family.

A Celebration of Life will be held on April 5th at 1:00 pm at the Hughson United Methodist Church and live-streamed on the church YouTube channel. Memorial donations to HUMC can be made in Sam Vaughn's name.