



## James Michael Conner

November 16, 1941 - January 8, 2021

Jim was a strong leader, a passionate pursuer of his goals and projects, determined and tenacious, but he couldn't win the fight with the COVID virus. He succumbed Jan. 8, 2021. Jim's mother Mildred Wagner was born on Ellis Island, N.Y. after her parents emigrated from Russia. She was part of the large community of Volga River Germans to settle in Fresno, CA. His father Jasper Truen Conner was born in Ruby, WA and was a banker with the Bank of Italy (later Bank of America) in Fresno. Jim was born on Nov. 16, 1941 and went to K through 12 there, 2 years at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, majoring in Ornamental Horticulture, and a year at Fresno State. He received his BS degree from Cal State Los Angeles in Business Administration.

His father was a banker but also an amateur horticulturalist and rock hound. He was accidentally killed when Jim was very young. Jim picked up his two favorite hobbies of rock collecting and horticulture from his dad.

During summer and winter vacations from Cal Poly he started working for Monrovia Nursery Co. in Azusa. He met Frances Adrienne Vaccaro (Andi) from Arcadia, CA at a Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity party at Cal Poly while she was attending U.C. Santa Barbara. They were married in July, 1964 in Arcadia. Her Dad teased that he was a "grafted" Italian since they shared the same skills of grafting plants and he became part of Andi's large Italian family.

He joined Hines Wholesale Nursery in Irvine and at the age of twenty-three became Sales Manager. He was able to travel to all of the major trade shows and visit most major nursery producers in the U.S. Tonya Michele was born while living in Tustin in 1967 and Steven James while in Orange in 1969. Jim had always dreamed of having his own nursery. So, in 1978 he and Andi started Alta Nursery, Inc. in San Jacinto, Calif. Andi quit teaching Elementary School and learned bookkeeping and office management. They shared the same office for 42 years.

The children wanted animals when they moved to San Jacinto so they joined the Winchester Harvesters 4H Club. They decided they wanted goats. Jim never even had a pet in his life but he volunteered to be goat leader with the enthusiasm and skill that he applied on all projects. They traveled to fairs all over Southern California showing their animals. Both children, Tonya and Steven, graduated from San Jacinto High.

Jim held many Civic offices, including serving on the San Jacinto School Board of Trustees for 5 years, being elected to the San Jacinto City Council for 9 years, and serving 2 terms as Mayor of San Jacinto, during which one of his pet projects was seeing that the Main Street Bridge come to fruition. He volunteered with the San Jacinto Rotary Club since 1984 and was President twice. He was a devoted member of the International Plant Propagators Society, was President of the Western Region in 2010, and as an International Delegate he and Andi were able to travel to many countries around the world including Japan, Africa, Australia, and Europe. They also traveled to China, New Zealand, Mexico and Hawaii. He loved spending time at their second home in Oceanside where he enjoyed reading, taking walks on the beach, and experiencing many of the great restaurants at the beach. Andi and Jim celebrated their 56th Anniversary on July 25, 2020. He was preceded in death by his parents, Jasper and Mildred Conner, brother Donald, and sister Jacqueline Hayes. He is survived by wife Andi, daughter Tonya Michele (Heiko) Schoenfuss of Minnesota, Steven James (Andrea) Conner of Mission Viejo, grandchildren, the lights of his life, Henry and Kirby Conner, a niece Dionne (Tony) Murch and nephews Donald Conner, Scott and Jeffrey Hayes and many beloved cousins. Services will be private. As an expression of love and sympathy memorial contributions can be made to Rotary of San Jacinto, P.O. Box 1691, San Jacinto, Ca 92581. Memories and condolences may be left for the family at <http://www.miller-jones.com>.

# Comments

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“ Dear Conner Family,  
We are saddened to read of Jim's passing and want to express our deepest sympathies to all of you great 4-H family. We think back of all the memories that we have of our families growing up at a great time in this valley. We know that your family made it wonderful to learn and grow with during that time. Thank you for all your effort, hard work, and love for all of us. We will miss Jim and hope that we see the Conner family out and about when time comes. Much love to all of you.  
Bill, Marty, and Laurie Mac Millan

Martha & Bill Mac Millan - March 01 at 08:58 PM

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“ I was hired Feb 15, 1973 by Cecil, Bud and Morris Picus to be the 1st "Quality Control Supervisor" at Hines Santa Ana. It was a new position and as became obvious no really knew what it was that i was supposed to do. After a few days of wandering about Bille the receptionist took pity on me and called Cecil and Cecil called Jim and told Jim to put me to work. So began my illustrious career @ Hines Nsy. I worked with and under Jim in several capacities and I was always amazed how knowledgeable Jim was about what was happening with our competitors and plant material we should be offering to our customers. He was truly dedicated to Hines nsy and the industry in general. He appears to have lived an exceptional life. Rest in Peace.

Richard Ehlers - February 01 at 12:35 PM

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“ San Diego County Flower & Plant Association purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of James Michael Conner.



San Diego County Flower & Plant Association - January 20 at 03:51 PM

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“ Andi Sorry to hear of your loss. Jim was a good man.  
Sharing the same office for 42 years and still married. WOW.  
Grace and I had 54 years .  
Regards John Bacher

**John W Bacher** - January 18 at 10:04 PM

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“ I was very saddened to read of the passing of Jim. It brought to mind many fond memories of him and your family. Jim was always very supportive of San Jacinto Schools and he was very helpful to me on many occasions. Your family was special to me for so many reasons and I want you to know that you will be in my thoughts and prayers. vicki manley

**victoria manley** - January 18 at 02:21 PM

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“ Andi and Family, Lisa and I are so sorry for your loss and pray that God will grant you peace and comfort at this time.

Jim was a wonderful man and friend. We always look back fondly on the times we shared with Jim and you. So many great memories and fun times together. We count ourselves fortunate to have known Jim and you and will always cherish the times we had together over a good meal and some wine. As well as the outings and trips, the annual Christmas Tree Gala and Dance.

I also appreciated the working relationship I had with you and all I learned from you both about the Nursery Industry!

With Love and our Deepest Sympathy!

Jeff and Lisa

**Jeff and Lisa Coit** - January 16 at 07:17 PM

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“ Jeffrey S. purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of James Michael Conner.



Jeffrey S. - January 16 at 06:31 PM

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“ To Andi and the Conner Family, your part in the Wholesale Nursery Industry will be a legacy to the Inland Empire and the Southwest United States. As a nursery inspector who frequented Alta Nursery, I came to appreciate and know the reach of your business. Alta Nursery was a major supplier of Native California chaparral plants and trees for the retail nurseries of Riverside County. I worked with your husband and his crew to help certify truckloads of plant material shipped to the higher elevations surrounding the communities of Phoenix and Sedona, Arizona. The higher elevations in these mountains and mesa received many additions to beautify their landscapes. Jim, Orla Jensen, and John Shogren were especially professional in the growing and you and your book-keeping and office management were a pleasure to work with from 1990 to 2003. Please accept my condolences on Jim's passing so suddenly and I grieve with your family on your loss. Thankful for the memories, Deborah Kotaka. (former employee of the Riverside Agricultural Commissioner's Office, San Jacinto, CA)

Deborah Kotaka - January 16 at 04:15 PM

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“ Jim has been a part of the nursery industry family for so many years and it has been wonderful to get to know Tonya as well. Jim was a regular visitor to Baileys and valued customer and partner. Our industry is better because of his contributions.

Terri McEnaney - January 15 at 02:56 PM

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“ My Dearest Adrienne,  
I love you and Jim. I remember all those times you guys would come and visit me at my BaskinRobbins store in Clovis. Such fond memories. So special from you and this marvelous loving man. May God comfort you. We will meet him again in heaven.  
Your Loving cuz  
John Schiro

john schiro - January 14 at 08:34 PM

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“ Adrienne and family, I know we haven't connected in many years, but Jim and you still contain fond memories of your trips to Tulare County (For Sago Palms) where you visited our farm and shared our joys with us of our goat projects. Jim had a wonderful life and we keep you in our prayers as you continue his legacy

Frank Schiro - January 14 at 03:57 PM

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“ You sometimes do not fully understand the impact and depth of involvement of someone like Jim Conner until he is no longer with us. I know that Jim loved his community, the citizens, children, and others who worked within the community. Jim, loved his family, his business, and the people who worked for him. He had great pride in all things San Jacinto, and would regale us with stories of his family, his travels, and his business life whenever he could. He was a quiet leader, leading by example, full of ideas and things to do to promote the greater welfare of San Jacinto and the surrounding community. I have had the privilege of being in the San Jacinto Rotary Club with Jim, and have enjoyed our conversations, jocularity, and fellowship. His presence will be sorely missed but his legacy will live on through all of us forever. I would imagine that his is off somewhere teeing up at the first hole of the golf course somewhere in heaven. I hear Saint Peter is a scratch golfer. Go get him, Jim. Thank you for all of the great times, fellowship, and memories.

John Norman - January 12 at 01:07 PM

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“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of James Michael Conner.



January 12 at 12:58 PM