

## S.F. attorney James Thacher dies

Chronicle Staff Report

Thursday, March 27, 2008

James F. Thacher, a longtime San Francisco attorney, philanthropist, sheep rancher and active Democrat, has died at age 83.

He was a familiar early-morning sight on the city's foggy sidewalks and windy street corners. For 55 years, he walked nearly every day - rain or shine - to his downtown law office from his Presidio Heights home. His final walk to his Pine Street address, last Thursday, occurred just hours before he suffered a fatal stroke, his family said.

Mr. Thacher, who died March 20, was a well-known figure in many worlds of San Francisco life from blue-blood charity causes to gritty political campaigns. "He was a stout and ineffable lawyer," said retired state Senator and Judge Quentin Kopp.

Born in San Francisco, he attended Tamalpais High School in Mill Valley before entering Yale in 1942. During World War II, he was an Army corporal, landing in Normandy, surviving the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944 and volunteering to cross one of the few remaining Rhine River bridges that Allied commanders feared was mined.

After the war, Mr. Thacher graduated from Yale Law School, and took over his father's law firm in 1953, specializing in trial law, general business and estates.

In the late 1950s, he took an active interest in Democratic politics, later serving as an adviser and strategist for a string of causes ranging from Edmund G. "Pat" Brown's run for governor to Northern California efforts to elect Sen. John F. Kennedy president. He eventually was appointed to the state college board of trustees and a toll bridge authority.

Locally, he headed efforts to elect then-Rep. Jack Shelley as San Francisco mayor in 1964, the first Democrat elected to the office in decades.

President Lyndon Johnson picked Mr. Thacher to hash out a perplexing problem for Washington: what to do with Alcatraz Island after the famed prison closed down. Mr. Thacher, along with others on federal panel, recommended the island become what it is today, a popular historical site with preserved cell blocks and guided tours. "He was wry, always clear-headed," Kopp recalled. "The pressures of all these campaigns and issues never perturbed him, and he usually had a smile."

In the 1970s, Mr. Thacher took on independent schools as another interest. He headed the board of trustees of Marin Country Day School in Corte Madera. He also led efforts to purchase the former San Rafael Military Academy and turn it into a new private high school, Marin Academy. The school grew from 59 students to its present enrollment of 400, and its leaders honored Mr. Thacher's work by naming a science building and lecture series after him.

He also supported efforts by his wife, Gladys, who founded the Education Fund in San Francisco in 1979. Since then, the Ed Fund has grown to become one of the city's largest nonprofit groups supporting public schools

through grants for teacher-run projects and classroom programs.

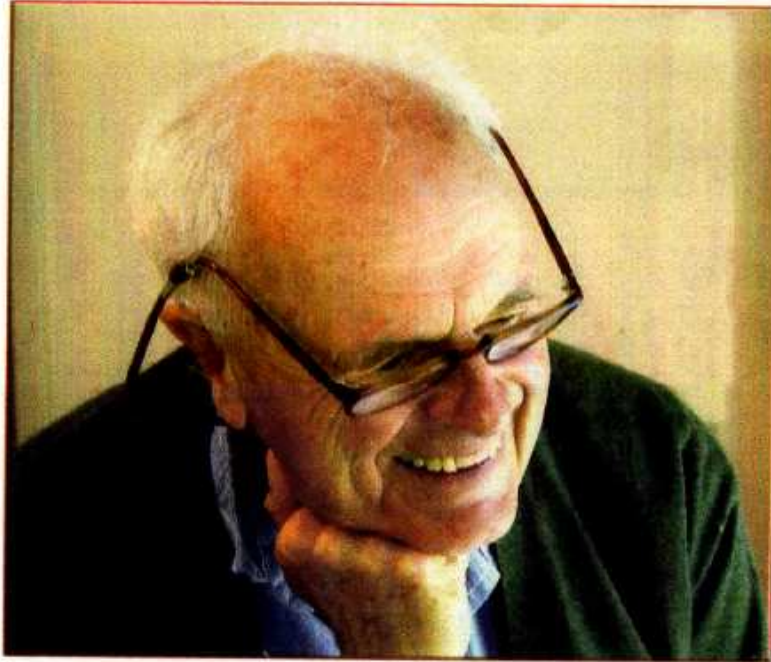
There was also time for other interests. He was a weekend sheep rancher at a 500-acre spread near Tomales, where he mended barbed-wire fences, sheared animals and repaired water lines. He studied picture-taking with photographer Ansel Adams in Yosemite. At 61, he trekked the John Muir Trail from Yosemite to Mount Whitney. He regularly hiked Russian River trails above the summer camp of the Bohemian Club, to which he belonged.

Along with his wife, he is survived by four children: Hally of New York City, Tom of Fallbrook in San Diego County, Gladys of Santa Monica and Will of Novato. There are also 10 grandchildren and his brother Carter, with whom he regularly walked to work.

A memorial service is planned for a later date.

The family asked that contributions in his memory be sent to Marin Academy, 1600 Mission Avenue, San Rafael 94901-0949 or a favorite charity.

# James Thacher



December 18, 1924 – March 20, 2008

A Celebration of Life  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
San Francisco, California  
March 24, 2008  
11 o'clock in the morning

## PRELUDES

**OPENING HYMN #510** Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove

**OPENING SENTENCES** BCP 469

**COLLECT** BCP 470

## READINGS

I Corinthians 13 read by Gladys Pomeroy Thacher

**PSALM 23** *said by all, in unison* led by Jennifer Thacher

**The LORD is my shepherd; \***  
**I shall not want.**

**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; \***  
**he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

**He restoreth my soul; \***  
**he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for**  
**his Name's sake.**

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the**  
**shadow of death, I will fear no evil; \***  
**for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff,**  
**they comfort me.**

**Thou preparest a table before me in the pres-**  
**ence of mine enemies; \***  
**thou annointest my head with oil; my cup**  
**runneth over.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all**  
**the days of my life, \***  
**and I will dwell in the house of the LORD**  
**for ever.**

## THE GOSPEL JOHN 10:11-15

*The Gospel is introduced, saying*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

*The People respond, saying* **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

*At the end of the Gospel is said,*

The Gospel of the Lord .

*The People respond,*

**Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

## REMEMBRANCES

Adrienne Thacher, Lauren Thacher,  
John Thacher, Thomas Thacher

## HOMILY

The Rev. Christine T. McSpadden

## HYMN #645

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

## PRAYERS

BCP 480 & 481

## OFFERTORY HYMN #516

Come Down O Love Divine

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

BCP 340

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you.

*People* **And with thy spirit.**

*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.

*People* **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

*Celebrant* Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

*People* **It is meet and right so to do.**

*The Celebrant continues*

"...We laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee and saying:"

*People* **Holy, Holy, Holy; Lord God of Hosts: Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High. Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

*The Celebrant continues*

"... By whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end..."

*All say together* **AMEN.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

## THE FRACTION

## THE INVITATION

**COMMUNION** *All are welcome and invited to share in communion*

## HYMN DURING COMMUNION #516

Come Down O Love Divine

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for that thou dost feed us, in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favor and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of thy Son, the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs by hope of thy everlasting kingdom. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.*

## BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

**HYMN # 657** Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

## POSTLUDE

All are invited to a reception  
downstairs in Dade Hall



## ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1755 CLAY STREET

SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109-3612

PHONE: (415) 673-7327

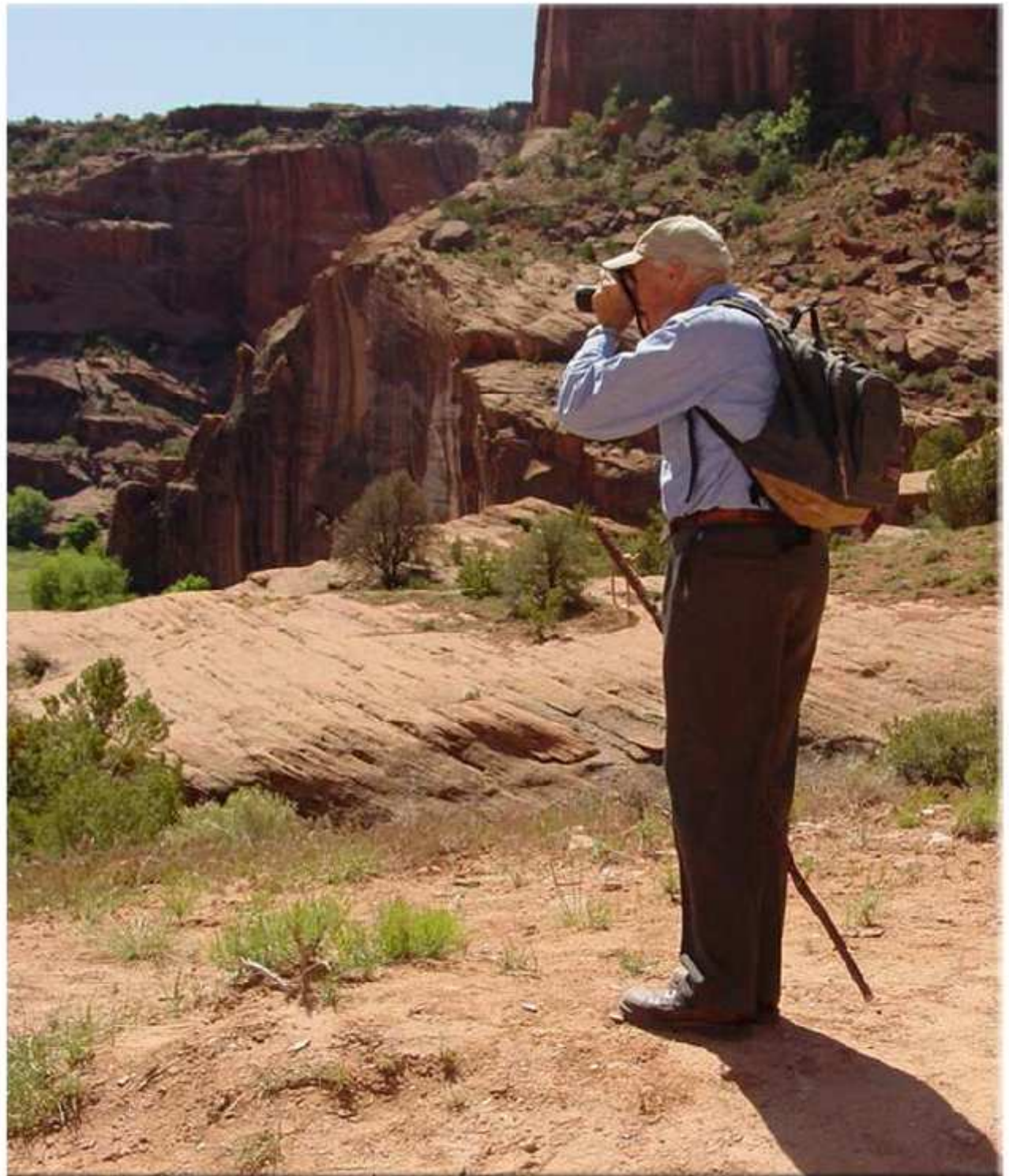
FAX: (415) 673-7328

e-mail: [office@stlukessf.org](mailto:office@stlukessf.org) Website: [www.stlukessf.org](http://www.stlukessf.org)

## The Last Summit of Whitney

The path gets rocky, Jim,  
take my hand to step over  
the granite boulder of pain,  
slide past that sheer declivity  
of breathlessness  
and catch sight of the summit  
up those switch backs  
worn but unfamiliar,  
your family strung out behind  
who won't make it by dark.  
a dark that will sweep up  
from the salt plains of Death Valley  
like a winter chill,  
never chosen but inevitable  
Whitney's crest loom barren  
despite those gone before,  
with step offs in every direction-  
step offs we all have flirted with,  
willing or not,  
when that speeding car rushed the light  
or that biopsy proved wrongly positive;  
air swirls up from the chasm  
nearly sucking you off the edge  
tempting you off the edge  
daring you off,  
until finally you step  
as your loved ones wave  
confidently off,  
gnarled walking stick in hand  
into the Ansel Adams Wilderness  
north  
always north,  
where the snowmelt breeze  
carries the sweet openings of lupine and lilac  
and the trail slopes easily downhill  
where a campfire already crackles  
by a lake, blue as heaven's forget-me-nots

*Charles K. Morris M.D.*



## Tribute by Adrienne Thacher

Grandpa's service: My speech

No one ever gets to really say goodbye but I am going to try.

To my dearest Ranger Bob, goodbye.

You have meant more to me than just a grandfather. You have always supported and encouraged me. When I had my doubts about Argentina you were right behind me giving me the push to go.

Goodbye Grandpa.

I have always felt such tremendous love and admiration from you. There are very few people that shape a person but you are one of my people. Your kindness is realized by anyone who comes in contact with you, I strive for that kindness. Your humility even with all of what you have achieved, I strive for that humility. And your love for nature, for family, for life, I strive to love as completely as you did.

Goodbye Grandpa.

I look at you, not only as a mentor but also as a friend, as my Ranger Bob. Your absence is a loss I wasn't prepared for. You are at a place now that I cannot go to but I know that you will continue to love and support me in my life. I love you and your spirit will always be alive in my heart. Goodbye Ranger Bob, rest peacefully now.

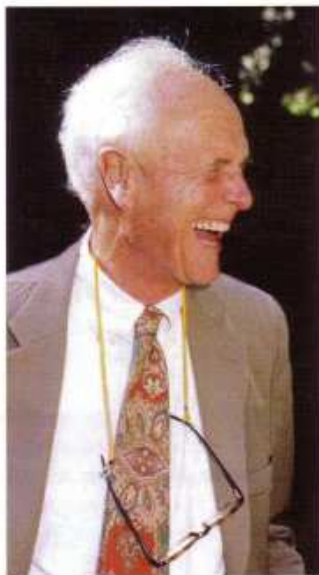
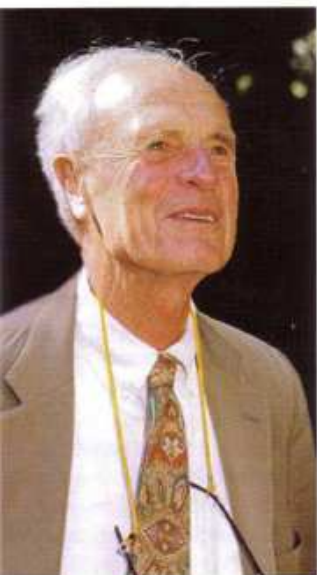
*Dear Marin Academy Community,*

*We write with great sadness to share with you the passing of James F. Thacher. A leader of enormous vision and deep commitment to educational equity, Jim served as Marin Academy's Founding Board Chair, helping to open the doors of the school in 1972 and continuing to serve on the Board for nearly thirty-five years. We are each the beneficiaries of his wisdom and generous spirit, and the impact of his efforts will be felt for years to come.*

*Pam Keon, Chair, Marin Academy Board of Trustees*

## TRIBUTE TO JIM THACHER

by Bodie Brizendine



JAMES F. THACHER  
1924 - 2008

Always humble, Jim Thacher stood larger than life. Angular in beauty, eyes sharp in readiness and tinged with mischievousness, he had about him a radiant particularity; there was just no missing him when he moved into the room. He viewed life as the ultimate form of exploration, full of the promise of the extraordinary in the ordinary, and there was nothing, absolutely nothing, not worth understanding better. With Whitmanesque tenderness and frankness, mankind was his business, and the world, both sweet and sad, remained for him both marvelous and full of mystery.

And of the legion of things that Jim made happen, Marin Academy was a standout. If humanity is beautiful and worth saving and worth loving, then what better way to ensure this value than to invest in the lives of the young? What better way to preserve the good than to hand down these truths to those who follow, asking them to do an even better job than those who come before? And Jim was resolute in this ethical imperative and unflinching in its resonance at MA. Hardwired to believe in the power of reciprocity, Jim told his school on day one that we have important roles to play as citizens of this world, and it was the very same message he gave to us thirty-five years later. I think fondly now of how often through stories he reminded us of why he founded Marin Academy. Once, at a New Parents Dinner, he recounted his time during World War II when decisions, matters of life and death, lived far beyond any utilitarian value. It wasn't about what you did; it was about how you did it. He then connected his story to why he founded MA because, in his words, he wanted to create a school that had behind it not only an academic but also a "moral purpose."

Just last year, as Marin Academy celebrated its 35th birthday, Jim was there by our side throughout the celebration, and we have several lasting memories. I can see him now at our whole school assembly—a room full of adolescents and faculty and staff—as we sang happy birthday to MA with unhinged joy and unconditional love. Jim stood at the end for a rousing salute. I can see him now at the Doobic Brothers Birthday Concert, standing next to Gladys, dancing in celebration. And, poignantly, I can see him now at the end of that event, sitting while alumni from those first years came to talk to him about what they were doing and how life had fared for them after Marin Academy. He knew all their names and asked after their parents, one by one.

And now it is time to honor this wonderful and passionate leader and friend by transforming our profound loss, our mighty grief, into the on-going legacy of our fine school. Indeed by thinking, questioning, and creating, and by answering Jim's call to stand up as good citizens and human beings, we can continue to lift up what Jim would never leave behind. And with absolute faith in our pilot we will look forward and celebrate as we look backwards and remember...all with memory of Jim Thacher in our hearts.

A celebration of Jim Thacher's life is being planned; as of this writing, no date has been set. We encourage you to visit the MA website over the next few days for an update on the time and place.