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LOCAL OBITUARIES

Sacramento public schools consultant, former Sacramento Bee reporter Bob Blattner dies

BY SAM STANTON

UPDATED FEBRUARY 14, 2023 1:05 PM





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*Blattner family*

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Robert William “Bob” Blattner, a prominent Sacramento public schools lobbyist and former reporter for The Sacramento Bee, died in his sleep Feb. 2 at his home in Davis.

Blattner, who was 67, was a longtime fixture at the state Capitol, where he advised school districts throughout California and lobbied on their behalf as the head of [Blattner & Associates](#), which he founded in 2006 and operated out of the Senator office building.

The firm never had any “associates,” his son, Jack, said.

“Smart, talented, warm, witty, friendly ... an exceptional human being,” former Bee sports editor and columnist Dan McGrath wrote in an online tribute to Blattner.

He was known for his gregarious personality, broad grin and a quirky nature that included sometimes sporting a monocle, sitting down at unattended pianos to belt out Christmas carols or show tunes and often defying convention.

He once purchased a convertible with leather seats that he began parking under downtown streets with the top down, resulting in the car filling with bird droppings.



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“Aw, what are you gonna do?” Blattner would say as he wiped the droppings off the passenger seat with a towel and insisted the car was none the worse for wear.

He was a frequent source for reporters seeking insight on [complex education stories](#), and regularly hosted high school students to offer them a glimpse of life inside the Capitol.

On Fridays, Blattner could sometimes be found walking the halls of the Capitol in shorts and flip-flops, explaining that “the members aren’t here anyway,” his son Jack recalled.

But his first love was journalism, a job he always insisted he would have done for free.

At The Bee, Blattner started at the newspaper’s old Neighbors section, and eventually was hired at The Bee to cover crime and education, where he teased out quotes and color from the scenes he encountered.

“Two nuns survived a spectacular wreck on Interstate 80 Friday morning with mere scratches and bruises after their car was dragged hundreds of feet under a big rig, California Highway Patrol officers said,” Blattner wrote in a 1994 dispatch.

“We were dead sure it was a miracle,” Sister Mary Christopher Brannigan said in her soft Irish brogue. “Have you seen the car? It’s a mess, a bit of accordion. I thought to myself, there’s living proof God wasn’t ready for me yet.”

Blattner was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, to Bill and Mary (nee Lang) Blattner and spent his early childhood in Walnut Creek.

His family returned to Pennsylvania in 1964, and Blattner eventually attended Yale University, where he studied medieval European history and was a champion

swimmer. A 1976 Associated Press [story recounted Blattner](#) capturing the 500-yard freestyle as the Yale swim team upset Harvard.

Blattner returned to California after graduating in 1976, and worked as a swim coach and as a composer and occasional performer of musical theater in San Francisco, according to his family.

He received a master's degree in journalism at UC Berkeley, where he met his future wife, Ann. He worked as a reporter at the Sacramento Union and the Daily Press of Newport News, Virginia, as well as The Bee.

Blattner spent much of his time in the family pool, taking work calls as he floated, and had an appetite for fine food and drink, often regaling guests with details of the butcher's description of the beef roast he was preparing for dinner.

He is survived by Ann, his wife of 30 years; sons Jack and Robby, and his brother John.

A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. March 4 at Veterans Memorial Center Theatre, 203 E. 14th St., in Davis. His family also has created a memorial site at bobbblattner.memorial.

This story was originally published February 14, 2023, 10:28 AM.



SAM STANTON



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Sam Stanton has worked for The Bee since 1991 and has covered a variety of issues, including politics, criminal justice and breaking news.

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BY CHRIS BIDERMAN

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