

Fran Collier



Fran Collier was a Dolphin Club friend, a consummate deck conversationalist, weight room captain, and runner. Most of us knew only a part or parts of Fran, but not the whole. Those who never hung out on the dock would have never crossed paths with her. Here's your chance to meet another one of our every-day exceptional members.

Fran joined the Dolphin Club in 1982 in the early days of women's membership. She ran for many years and spent time socializing in the weight room, on the dock, and at Club parties. The Club became an important part of her life; she enjoyed many hours here and found many friends, friends who cut across gender/age/race, and friends she also took into other parts of her life—movies, politics, and travel. She traveled frequently and to most corners of the world. Her last few trips included Georgia and its neighbors, and Iceland.

I met her in the weight room over gym conversations discussing politics and culture. She would stay around so you could talk with her, after a swim and sauna, always curious to know about you, your life.

Before the pandemic, Fran went to multiple movies a week and often attended lectures or special talks where many of us connected with her.

And her politics. Fran was passionate about politics and invested in her own education, subscribing to and reading a range of publications. Politics influenced her travels, movies, and cultural adventures. I knew not to ask her age; she was also a private person. To the end, Fran was a strong-willed, open-minded, inclusive, and active woman. She was a loving mother and grandmother. *Laura Atkins*

Jimmy Vanja



Walt Schneebeil, Miss Golden Gate Swim, and Jimmy Vanya

Jimmy Vanja was a Dolphin Club member since 1955, very soon after he arrived in San Francisco. For many years he was swimming or piloting in all the events. He swam Alcatraz in under an hour and, per his recent recollection, his best time for the Golden Gate was 26 minutes and 33 seconds. He also ran to the GG Bridge and back every afternoon, accompanied by Walter Stack, Andy Berli, and Ray Talavera.

But his fondest—and scariest—memories were nights rowing beside people attempting to swim from the Farallons. A fishing boat would take them out, then leave them without “blinkers” or radios. During the night, the swimmers would disappear behind the waves. And the fog didn't help. Sometimes, someone would build a fire at Stinson Beach—the closest mainland point—to guide the boats. Jimmy had to pull the heavy Ike Pape over the transom. George Farnsworth, a mile from shore, couldn't take the 53 degree water, while a 15 year-old girl from Sacramento, who wasn't in either club, got lost in the fog. “We found her eventually,” Jimmy said, “but she never went swimming again.”

But any excitement in San Francisco paled beside his early years when his large family farm in Yugoslavia was requisitioned by the Germans for a hospital. Along with his mother and siblings, they were relegated to living in the kitchen. His father, the unofficial mayor of Cerovo, had disappeared after protesting the treatment of the villagers. But at least they ate well until the Russians arrived and kicked them out. Time to emigrate: first to Italy, then Canada, and finally the City. His family soon followed. While in a refugee camp, he learned the electrical trade, which made him very employable in the City. He later became an inspector, until he retired at 83.

Jimmy was alert and in a good mood right up to his death. He would have been 96 in August. *John Selmer*