

# Former RE Jay Bratton was tireless supporter of NWR

**BY SHERRI MASTERSON**  
Contributing Editor

On June 13, the Northwest Region lost a longtime member, Jay W. Bratton, 75, after a short illness.

Jay is survived by everyone reading this and more, but, specifically, by daughter Sheila and son Michael; five grandchildren, Aaron, Ashleigh, Jason, Ian and Marley; one great-grandchild, Chloe; and by his most precious love, Gail Donnelly.

At 5:30 p.m. PDT July 2, a glass was tipped in Jay's honor by good friends and family at Pacific Raceways, Portland International Raceway, Hallett Motor Racing Circuit (Oklahoma), and by Northwest, Oregon, San Francisco, Big Island of Hawaii, St. Louis, and many other region members across the country.

A celebration of life was held at SOVREN's Pacific Northwest Historics at Pacific Raceway. There are also plans to honor Jay at Northwest-Big Island of Hawaii Regions' Trans Pacific 3 at Bremerton in August.

Jay currently held the position of race treasurer, steward and starter with SCCA and co-race chair (with Dick Buckingham) with Sovren. We will all miss the calls on the radio "Race Chair Jay, Race Chair Jay." The words will go unanswered but will remain forever in our hearts. He was a gentleman, a friend, and delight to have around with a smile on his face. He will be missed greatly. Race in peace, Jay!

## A biography of Jay Wesley Bratton

Jay Wesley Bratton was born at Seattle General Hospital on Jan. 25, 1935, to proud parents J. Wesley and F. Winifred Bratton. He was baptized a couple of months later by



Contributed photo

**Donning a grass skirt, Jay Bratton shakes a leg.**

his maternal grandfather.

Although he was born in Seattle, he actually grew up in California. Shortly after Jay was born, the sen-

ior J. Wesley got a teaching position in Westwood, Calif., so the family took up residence in the shadow of Mount Lassen.



Sherri Masterson photos

**Above left, Jay Bratton attended the 2009 Northwest Region convention. Above right, Bratton flags at Pacific Raceway.**



He had a normal upbringing and advanced out of grade school in 1947. Another move by his family brought them to the Los Angeles area, where he spent the rest of his school days. Jay graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach in the class of 1953.

Jay dabbled with college for a couple of years but then enlisted in the U.S. Army. While serving in Germany, he met a vacationing young lady named Carol. Carol's parents were friends of Jay's family who were in Europe on music scholarships. While in Europe, they looked up Jay in Germany, along with their daughter, and she was immediately smitten. A romance ensued, followed by their marriage in 1957, the eventual outcome of which was a daughter, Sheila, a year later.

Jay was eventually reassigned to Fort Carson, near Colorado Springs, Colo. One noteworthy incident was his managing to set fire to his office at the fort. The disciplinary act that

followed caused him a temporary loss of rank and pay. However, he eventually regained his rank of sergeant, and he did receive an honorable discharge. Jay was discharged from the Army in March 1959. His marriage, unfortunately, did not survive the stresses of Army life.

Following his discharge, Jay returned to college with a greater sense of purpose. He graduated from California State University Long Beach in 1961 with majors in drama and speech. During this time, he also met and married, Barbara; and, they had a son, Michael, in 1962.

Jay, being the achiever that he was, continued his education at USC. He earned a masters of fine arts, again in drama and speech. Jay added to this a California Junior College teaching credential in drama.

In 1963, Jay and family moved to Longview, where he taught speech at Lower Columbia College. He became active in various college-level

theater companies doing set and lighting design and directing, and became a member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Jay also worked part-time as a disc jockey and sportscaster for a local radio station, and part-time as a policeman. He quit the radio job when the station switched from a classical format to "Top 40," which didn't match his tastes.

About this time he either discovered sports cars or finally had enough money to indulge in one. He bought his first sports car, a bugeye Austin Healy Sprite. With his new sports car, Jay joined his first car club, the Cowlitz Valley Sports Car Club. It had traditionally been a "family outings" type of group organizing tours, picnics and other family outings until the "guys" discovered an event called "autocross," which changed everything. There are still a number of SOVREN and NWR SCCA (like Randi Graffy) who first met Jay during his stint at CVSCC.

Jay and Barbara parted ways in 1964, and in 1969, he moved back to the Seattle after his 28-year absence. He became an advertising agent for a local trade publication. He must have been fairly successful at it, because in 1975, he was elected President of the Seattle Advertising Association.

Jay continued with his activities in live theater, directing and doing set and lighting design for the Bellevue Play Barn throughout the 1970s. It was at this time while directing the play, "6 Rooms Riv Vue," that Jay's path first crossed that of a

young ingenue, Gail Donnelly.

Jay joined Sports Car Club of America in 1973, as an announcer and starter; and, within only a few years, he became a chief starter. Jay always said that one of the secrets to being a good starter was having a background in either military or police work, and, of course, Jay had both. Jay's trademark as a starter was "Big Bertha," an oversized checkered flag that would be visible to even the most jaded of racers.

Jay was active in other club activities, rising to hold the office of regional executive for Northwest Region from 1981 through 1984. During his tenure, the annual Double National event was started, now in its 31st year. He was instrumental in organizing several pro events, including the Winston West-WCAR Formula Atlantic-American Cities Racing League Sports 2000 events through the streets of Tacoma and Spokane in the late '80s. He has served as race chairman at many events during his racing career, experience that has proven invaluable, especially when SOVREN needed a person to fill in for Dick Buckingham during his recovery, and to share those

duties since.

During these early racing days, Jay met and married Dottie who shared his enthusiasm. Jay, individ-

ually and with Dottie, received many awards for their efforts. However, as Dottie's enthusiasm waned, so did their relationship and they parted company. Shortly thereafter, Jay met Maggie and after a brief romance they married and enjoyed life together until her untimely death. At that time, he resigned himself to bachelorhood.

In 1990 Jay left the advertising business and became a mortgage broker. Jay worked tirelessly to work through the quagmire of documents required and was especially helpful when the residual from previous relationships muddied the waters. Jay semi-retired in 1999 but was still available to friends and acquaintances for help and advice.

Jay hung up his starter's flags soon after the turn of the century and joined the steward ranks. The circulation in his legs had become such that he could no longer take the hours of standing the starter position required.

At the time of his death, besides the SOVREN co-race chairmanship position, he held SCCA divisional steward and national starter licenses.

