
From: Sara Fahy [REDACTED] m>
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 2:42 PM
To: MARTINEZ, VALENTE
Subject: Re: Memorial Donation Request

City of Costa Mesa
Public Services Department
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

January 28, 2026

Dear Mr. Martinez,

Thank you for taking my call today and for your kindness in supporting our wish to donate a park bench in honor of our father. I present this request, in honor of our father, and on behalf of his three grandchildren and my sister, Logan Baker, and my husband all who are residents of the City of Costa Mesa.

Our beloved father, Steven Lee Baker, passed away peacefully in his sleep on July 6, 2025, in Orange County, California. He lived a full life for 78 years and in his latter years bravely toughed out a long battle with Parkinson's. It was fitting that he went to heaven just a few days after the 4th of July, a holiday he loved and that Costa Mesa celebrates so proudly- representing strength, perseverance and freedom....all so true to the way he lived his life. Though he traveled the world, he was a longtime resident of Costa Mesa over the years and deeply loved the beautiful parks in our community, and the many beautiful trees, wildlife and the nature that is woven through our neighborhoods.

Steve grew up in Southern California and lived many adventures, surfing, skiing, fishing, camping, studying reptiles and nature, loving and making good music, and pursuing various artistic endeavors, breaking hearts with his good looks, towering stature, quick-wit, unmatched sense of humor, fiery spirit and old fashioned country-boy know-how. He grew to love and play folk and bluegrass music, and he played it well, from Grass Valley Bluegrass Festivals to the Swallows Inn in San Juan Capistrano, to the Station Inn in Nashville, and, of course, the front porch at home. Steve was a true businessman, always wheelin' and dealin' and making many lifelong friends along the way. Steve was, in his own words, one of the rare people blessed to have been able to turn his hobby (a love for music and vintage instruments), into a career, where he spent many years travelling the world, to ultimately help amass what would become known as one of the world's largest and most comprehensive private collections of rare American vintage stringed instruments in the world at the time, (particularly Banjos), with showrooms in Beverly Hills, Tokyo and Newport Beach. He was an expert on the details of things, whether it was about a pre-war Martin D45, a 1925 Vega tubaphone 5-string, or just exactly how to prepare a killer Monte Cristo sandwich (And he was sure Dick Church's Restaurant on Newport Blvd had that Monte Cristo down best). He had the eagle eye on spotting things that were truly "one-of-a-kind". Steve was always the most generous to share whatever he had - his knowledge, his passionate faith, or a piece of that perfect sandwich.

Our father's investment in the arts, culture and outdoors of Costa Mesa goes back over 40 plus years when he organized a first of its kind, "Bluegrass and Traditional Music Expo '86" held at the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa, just across the street from the lakes at TeWinkle Park. Back then, the event was filled with three days of live music, 200+ exhibits, and packed "campgrounds with lots of trees and grass", families and community. I remember the grassy knolls of the OC Fairgrounds filled with old timers and their mandolins, guitars and banjos and toddlers, including my sister, running around the fields.

The Daily Pilot on Sept 5, 1986 featured a multi-page spread on the event, which I've attached, interviewing dad who spoke of the resurgence of Bluegrass Music and the value of community in walking right up to world

famous players to play you a tune. His love of music and nature often went hand in hand and you could find him on a park bench or on our front porch playing the banjo or the harmonica bringing joy to all who might hear.

As a former Parks & Community Services Commissioner myself, it was an honor to help our city care for some of the parks that our father so often took us to growing up. In his latter years, he never hesitated to set aside his aches and pains to jump on the swings with his granddaughter, or kneel down to discover a new bit of flora or fauna with our little ones. Our parents raised us to believe that preserving and caring for places in nature for our neighbors to enjoy is a responsibility and honor we are blessed to have.

In honor of our father and grandfather, Steven L. Baker, we would like to request approval to donate a bench, similar to those already placed in the park, with an accompanying memorial plaque located near the newly renovated lakes area of TeWinkle Park, where visitors can enjoy the natural setting and peaceful atmosphere and perhaps play a tune on their own instruments for the neighborhood to enjoy. Our proposed plaque wording is as follows (or similar, per City guidelines):

"[PLAQUE TEXT – e.g., 'In Honor of Steven L. Baker, With Courage, Joy and Faith']"

A bench in this location would provide a place for rest, reflection, and connection to nature—values our father held dearly. With all of his grandchildren living nearby in Costa Mesa, this will be a place for our family to remember and rejoice in the beauty of nature around us. We believe this would be a meaningful and lasting tribute to his life and his love for the outdoors, and for valuing the little wonders of creation all around us, from the trees to the streams, to the turtles, hummingbirds on the birds of paradise and the ducks and geese in our Costa Mesa community.

I thank you, the Public Services Department, the Parks & Community Services Commission and the City Council and staff for the work you are doing to repair and renovate the treasured Lakes at TeWinkle Park and we would be grateful for the opportunity to work with the City to make this tribute possible. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

With gratitude,

Sara J. Fahy
Costa Mesa, California

949 227 1176