

## Obituary: Museum volunteer who displayed creativity dies

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Published: Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2011 - 12:00 am | Page 4B

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**Richard George Horgan**, a volunteer who inspired museum patrons with his creativity and dedication to building science and nature exhibits, died Jan. 13 of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. He was 85.

From the early 1990s until he was diagnosed a year ago with ALS, Mr. Horgan volunteered thousands of hours as a carpenter at the **Discovery Museum Space & Science Center** in Sacramento. He built most of the four science exhibits at the center, a non-for-profit group with no paid workshop staff.

His attention to detail exceeded designers' expectations and delighted visitors. He often recycled materials for projects, including the Gee Whiz Geology exhibit, which features a preschool play area with baby dinosaurs. Some of his creations toured the state on loan to other museums.

"He could build anything I challenged him with," said **Susan Douglas**, museum program director. "If there wasn't a task to do, he'd help us with the school groups. He just wanted to contribute."

Mr. Horgan also volunteered at **Effie Yeaw Nature Center** in Carmichael. Besides creating exhibits, he repaired animal enclosures and helped staff workers take presentations out to schools.



His creations spoke to inquisitive young people – literally, in the case of a condor display he helped build with life-size wings that engulfed an armchair for visitors to sit and listen to recorded wisdom that a young bird would hear from a wise grandmother condor. The exhibit also was loaned to the **Museum of Natural History in Pacific Grove.**

"The work that he did here has gone out to serve this community and many other communities," center Executive Director Marilee Flannery said. "He really had an effect on the education of thousands of children."

A soft-spoken and unassuming man, Mr. Horgan nonetheless was recognized for his service. He was chosen to carry the Olympic torch in the 1996 relay, and the **Volunteer Center of Sacramento** named him 2004 Volunteer of the Year. He received a **lifetime achievement award** from the **Discovery Museum** and a **Presidential Service Award.**

Born in 1925 in Woodland, he grew up on a farm in **Zamora** and graduated from **Woodland High School** in 1942. He immediately joined the Navy and served aboard a landing-ship tank in the **Pacific** during **World War II.**

He married his wife, Jane, in 1948 and had two children. He worked at a Woodland service station, studied electronics and eventually took a radar job at **McClellan Air Force Base.** He retired in 1986.

Mr. Horgan's sense of duty and can-do attitude were set early in life. As a sailor barely out of high school, he served as a gunner keeping watch for kamikaze aircraft and Japanese suicide swimmers while fighting at Okinawa and the **Philippines** during the war.

"We had a job to do, a task," he told The Bee in 1995. "We were a group of people aboard ship and ... (you) did what you had to do, and that was it."

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