

Obituary

Local Activist Fought for Bicycle-Friendly Cities

BY Jacqueline Johnston
Contribution Writer
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Alexander Zuckermann, founder of the East Bay Bicycle Coalition and advocate of bicycle-friendly policies, died of complications from a brain injury on Aug. 5. He was 86.

Friends said Zuckermann helped expand bicycle access to BART, several Bay Area bridge and hundreds of miles of bicycle trails and lanes throughout the East Bay.

“The work Alex was involved in really touched on everybody’s lives,” said Robert Raburn, executive director of the bicycle coalition. “The Bay Area is a better place to live now. We have bike-friendly streets and transit systems. We’re just beginning to get it.”

Besides being a leading proponent of bicyclist rights, Zuckermann was also known for his friendly style of activism, said Craig Hagelin, chair of the East Bay Bicycle Coalition.

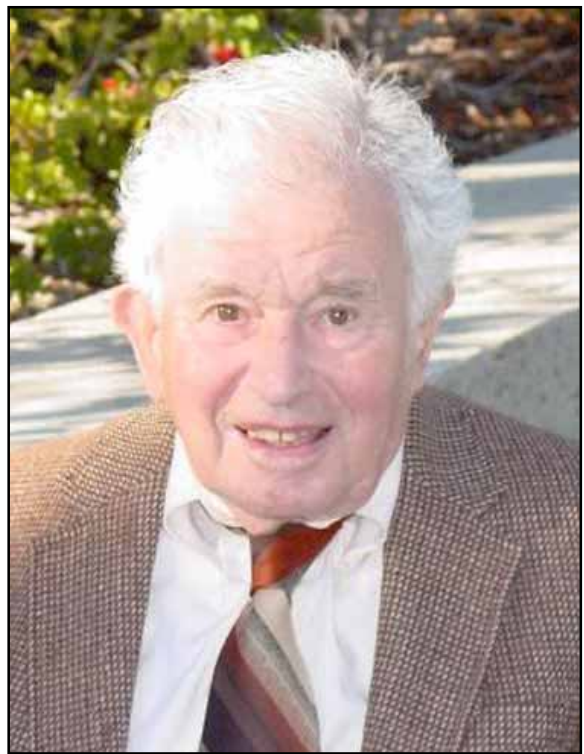
“He had a nice, gentle approach. He could really get things done,” he said.

Zuckermann was born in Berlin, Germany in 1921 and immigrated to New York City with his family in 1938 because of the Nazi takeover of Germany, said Zuckermann’s son, Ron.

When he was young, Zuckermann left the East Coast and hitchhiked across the country to San Francisco, later moving to Berkeley.

Zuckermann received a master’s degree in city planning from UC Berkeley and then worked as a planner for the city of Oakland, Ron Zuckermann said.

Zuckermann first started riding bicycles in 1970 when his young sons took up the hobby, but became increasingly interested when he used bicycling as a



form of transportation.

“He got into it for practical, commuting purposes,” said Ron Zuckermann. “His awareness of the environment was his primary reason (for commuting by bicycle.)”

Zuckermann founded the East Bay Bicycle Coalition in 1972 with the goal of pushing for bicycle-friendly policies.

During his career as an activist, Zuckermann met with everybody from local politicians and planners to the directors of Caltrans in his effort to create a bicycle-friendly Bay Area, Raburn said.

Ron Zuckermann said he remembers his father as an advocate of riding bikes both as transportation and for fun.

“He was always a big proponent of riding for recreation as well as transportation,” he said.

In 2002, Zuckermann suffered a serious bicycle crash when, during a 3 a.m. ride across the Bay Bridge with the director of Caltrans, Zuckermann’s bicycle hit an expansion grate, Raburn said.

Zuckermann was in a coma for several months after the crash and was confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life, Raburn said.

Those who knew Zuckermann said he will be remembered for his positive demeanor and contributions to the bicycling community.

“Everybody who gets on a bike, you see that feeling of joy, and Alex embodied that joy,” Raburn said. “He was truly beloved. He was this little sort of guy who was so endearing.”

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