

# SO FARR, SO GOOD

## Dad sees vision carried out by congressman son

By PAUL WOLF

IT WAS the eve of the big vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Fred Farr telephoned his congressman son in Washington to speak his mind.

"Sam, I said, 'I don't agree with your stand against NAFTA.' He told me, 'Don't worry, I've already changed my position. I've been losing sleep over this, and I've decided I'm gonna support it. It's the right thing to do.'"

The 84-year-old Carmel resident, a former 12-year state senator, is fortunate enough to have immediate access to a legislator.

Father and son chat by phone a couple of times a week. They don't always see eye to eye, as in the case of the congressman's initial position on the trade bill. While Sam's turn-about in November 1993 may have been to his father's liking, he drew strong criticism from the ranks of NAFTA opponents.

"No, we don't always agree," said Fred Farr, a retired attorney with a private practice in Carmel for decades. "And we don't talk about politics at Thanksgiving."

When Sam was re-elected to the 17th Congressional District Nov. 8, beating Republican challenger Bill McCampbell, Fred took "vicarious enjoyment" in the victory.

After all, if they occasionally clash on issues, they do share a basic philosophical outlook, grounded in a commitment to environmental protection, education and government as a "partner" of private enterprise.

### A golden age?

Who would have foreseen the turn of events back in the mid-1950s, when Fred was a senator and Sam a summer page. Sam regards the time in which his father served as a kind of golden age.

"Looking back, my father served in a blooming and creative period for California, but now, unfortunately everyone is starting to feel the squeeze," Farr said, alluding to current economic and environmental constraints.

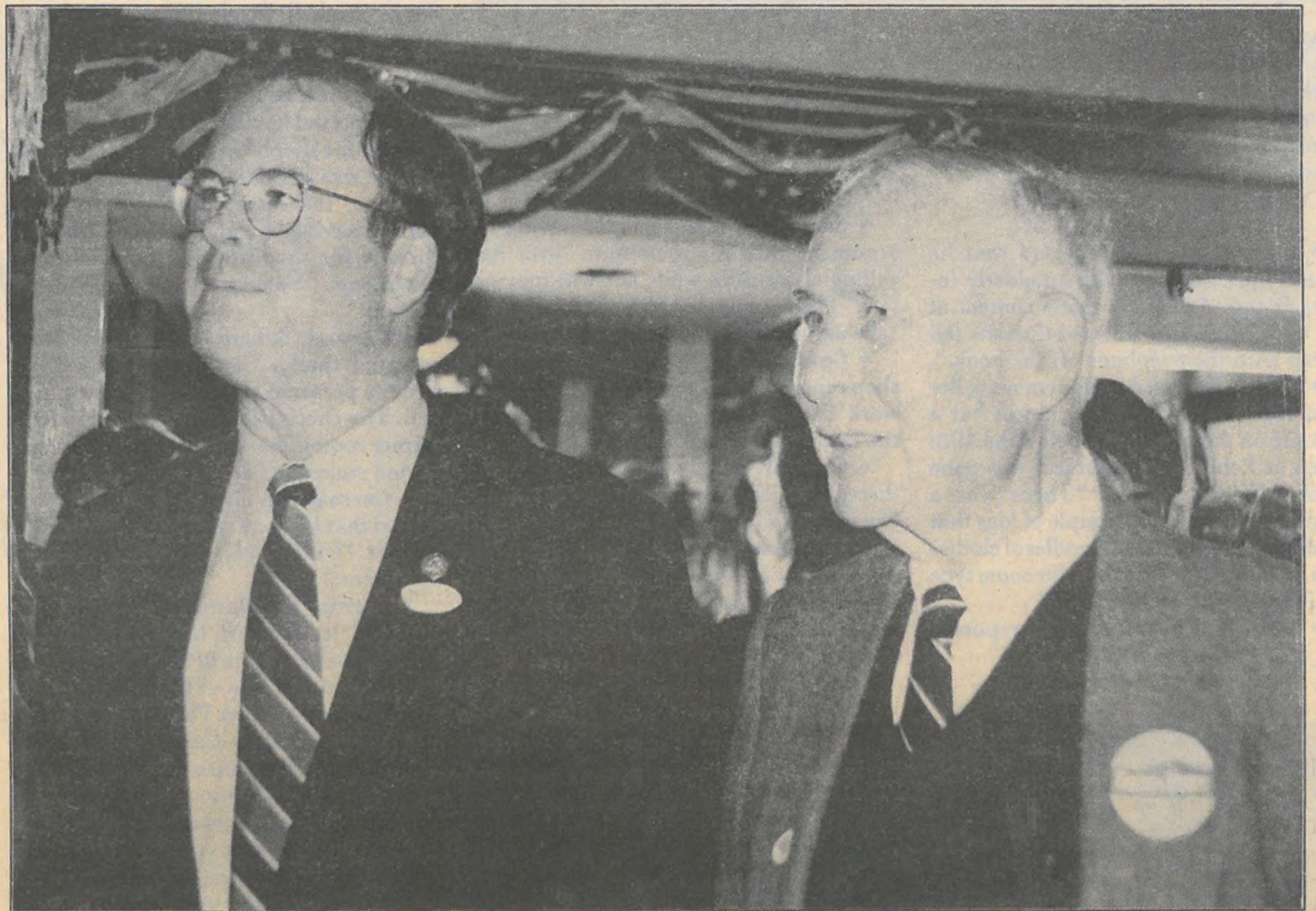
And the elder Farr offered what may be the ultimate compliment to Sam: "I think I enjoyed Sam's election to congress even more than to the assembly. He is representing the district well...and he has made a better congressman than I would have made."

Although Fred Farr became one of the most influential voices on the Central Coast, his start in politics was inauspicious.

In the early 1950s, he thought he was finished with politics when he lost a bid for Carmel City Council and another for state assembly. It was only after a state senator died and left an opening that his supporters urged him to enter a special election. He ended up serving from 1955 to 1967.

Neither did the younger Farr seem bound for political life. He had been a Peace Corps volunteer and a legislative analyst in Sacramento before Gov. Jerry Brown, in 1974, appointed him to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors.

"Like most children I know, I



PHOTO/SUSAN BECK

On Election Night '94 at his Monterey headquarters, Sam Farr (left) and Fred Farr watched closely as the results came in.

certainly didn't plan to do what my father did," he said.

Subsequently, he was re-elected to the board of supervisors and, in 1980, elected to the state assembly, where he stayed until last year, when he ascended to congress to replace Leon Panetta.

### Family trait

"In our family, we all had a strong sense of public service," said Fred Farr. "My wife, Janet (who died in 1965), was with the PTA and the League of Women Voters. From the start, Sam was always very motivated, but he didn't think about public office."

Fred Farr was one of California's pioneers in the field of environmental legislation. He authored a number of bills that were early examples of the state's efforts to protect the environment and manage growth. For five years,

he served as chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, playing a key role in the designation of Route 1 in Big Sur as a scenic highway.

"We were known as conservationists, not environmentalists, a term which has broad meaning today," he said.

Farr maintains that environmental issues should not simply be left to the local jurisdictions to decide. For instance, over time, the value of the Monterey Bay has been recognized by the state and the nation.

The pressures of development and commercialism are such that the Central Coast warrants extra protections, he argued.

Indeed, Fred Farr looks to his son to help fulfill the dreams of the region — particularly the transformation of Fort Ord. In the end, the new investment in education and scientific research should

bring environmental dividends.

"We are entering a very interesting time," Fred Farr said. "There certainly are some opportunities here — the way things are beginning to tie together nicely. All these people who will be part of Cal State, Monterey Bay, will also be very interested in protecting Big Sur and the Coast."

Sam Farr said the goal of "linking up" the educational institutions of the Monterey Bay Area dates back to the 1960s, but it is only becoming reality today. Thus, the direct connection between father and son becomes all the stronger.

"My dad," Sam commented, "has been an incredible inspiration — not just for me personally as his son, but to all who come in contact with him."



PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

This 1981 photo shows Fred Farr with his son, Sam, and granddaughter Jessica at a dedication ceremony in Carmel.