



Juan José Goñi Baamonde

March 16, 1959 - May 19, 2026

Juan José Goñi Baamonde was born in La Coruña, Galicia in Spain, on March 6, 1959. The first son of Remedios Baamonde López and Juan Goñi Lecue, and born in the thick of Francisco Franco's regime, Juan Goñi used to tell stories of growing up at a time when police, armed with machine guns, walked the streets, and conservatism stifled independence and cultural identity.

He always knew he wanted to be a bridge engineer. In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, his grandfather and father helped reconstruct the bridges and roads bombed by opposing political sides. Some still stand today.

Concrete ran in his blood. He loved his country, and he understood the pain, effort and manpower it took to bring people together.

Once Spain fully transitioned and embraced democracy, he was on his way to the United States for an engineering internship in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was supposed to be one year in America, but he never left because he fell in love with his best friend, his wife, Gloria Lessan. The two of them met at a prayer meeting at Loyola University and worked on their doctorates at Tulane, his in civil engineering and hers in sociology. They got married before successfully defending their dissertations.

Gloria, more than one foot shorter than Juan, inspired him to stand tall and

proud, not difficult to do at a towering 6 foot 3. They had a daughter, Ana Cristina, and decided to settle in Tallahassee, Florida, after a brief stint in Norfolk, Virginia. Tallahassee was a good place to raise a family, he always said. A house with a yard, with loquat trees for shade and a large basement for all of his books; a church down the street and good burgers nearby; sweet tea and a beach 45 minutes away; Tallahassee was home.

For over 35 years, he constructed a life filled with friends from every corner of society: engineers, professors, neighbors, food service workers, nurses, students, parishioners, strangers. His daughter's friends were his children, and his home was open to all.

He lived with the mantra that no barrier was too complicated to find a way across, whether it was a deep valley or political beliefs. He accepted all with no caveats, and he could leave his hair long and beard unkempt because even if his wife hated it, his daughter thought it looked good anyway. He wasn't a fan of tattoos, but in the last months of his life, he appreciated the small toro his daughter got on her shoulder. He said it was nice, an extraordinary compliment, and said "Really?" when she said it was for him.

He loved talking about politics, history, Star Trek, rebar, science, and K-dramas on Netflix, but raved over his wife's research, his daughter's journalism career and anything that had to do with his perfect granddaughter, Frances.

Juan Goñi built bridges, but he didn't just design the substructures and trusses that span over rivers and highways. In his 67 years of life, his generosity and unconditional support created connections between people who would otherwise never meet. He helped people find jobs and safe homes. He extended invitations to others to join family meals and celebrations.

Juan Goñi built bridges because it was necessary, in his opinion, because family, friends and community were all that mattered. What was his was yours, whenever you needed it, because he loved you.

He is survived by his wife, Gloria T. Lessan Leychen; his daughter, Ana Cristina Goñi-Lessan (Keith McCall); granddaughter, Frances Marceline McCall-Goñi; his brother, Miguel Goñi (Blanca Fuste); nieces: Blanca and Beatriz; and nephew, Miguel; his sister, Cristina Goñi (Javier Marti); his uncle, Placido Baamonde; and relatives in Galicia and the Pais Vasco in Spain.

A mass will be held on May 29 at 1:30 p.m. at Blessed Sacrament, 653 Miccosukee Road. A celebration of life will be held afterward at Hummingbird Wine Bar, 1216-4 N. Monroe St. All are invited to both. Please wear your favorite colorful shirt.

In lieu of flowers, please take a moment to ask someone how they're doing or if you can do something for them. Invite someone to dinner or grab a beer with an old friend. Check in with your community, and show up for someone in need. Because that's what he would have wanted, and it's what he did best. And always leave a generous tip.

Ashli McCall, of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) has the honor of assisting the family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

MAY **29**. 1:30 PM (ET)

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
653 Miccosukee Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32308
(850) 222-1321

Tribute Wall

DF

“ My heart goes out to Gloria and Maria Cristina, and their larger, loving families. Juan and Gloria have always been "rocks" for the Fay family in Tally. My Dad, mother Vicky, and brother Alan all gained so much from Juan and Gloria's friendship, and my brother and mother continue to gain to this day, as do my family and I, albeit from a greater distance. Juan and my Dad, who also recently passed away, were very close friends. They both dreamt of bridges and their power to unite people. I remember fondly their smiles and eyes full of sparkles when they talked about bridges, and culture, and poems, and life in general. Juan brought out the best in my Dad, as I am sure he did with so many people. He, together with his wife Gloria, always made us feel so welcome when we came back for visits after being away for a year or longer. May we all remember him as someone who made the world a better place.

David Fay - May 27 at 02:27 AM

HB

“ From: Henry Bollmann
Very shocked and saddened to hear about Juan leaving us so very soon, I enjoyed Juan's "think out of the box" attitude. We had wonderful lively debates and discussions about various engineering issues during his time working at FDOT. He always contributed new ideas to be shared. A kind generous person.

henry bollmann - May 26 at 09:02 AM

JL

“ Joseph LoBuono -
I was deeply saddened to learn of Juan's passing. We had a somewhat stormy history with some head bumping on technical engineering matters. But at the core there was mutual respect both personally and professionally. We worked together on a project in Monterrey Mexico where his wife Gloria had family. I remember several warm family dinners during our work related visits there. I will always remember his energy level and his commitment to things that interested him. Rest in peace Juan, you left us too early.

Joseph LoBuono - May 23 at 07:05 PM

ST

“ *I met Juan the way that most young people in Tallahassee did, at Midtown Caboose. We met at a time where I was working three jobs to support myself in a new city while I was furthering my career in a similar field to his. Often when a new table would talk to me he would tell them "You have no idea how hard this young lady works!". He took an interest in my life and my future. He never stopped talking about his family and the love of his life, Gloria. He had absolutely no reason to but he had so much kindness and encouragement to extend to me, a complete stranger. I am so grateful to have met him and I offer my deepest condolences to his family.*

Sommer Turner - May 22 at 08:30 PM

JI

“ *I am incredibly saddened at the passing of Juan. He was family to midtown caboose, and no doubt anyone who knew him. He always went the extra distance to talk to and care about other people. I and so many others will miss him and undoubtedly never forget him.*

Joseph Ireland - May 22 at 08:01 PM

DE

“ Sending deepest sympathy and to the family. Although Don and I never met Juan or Gloria, our deceased daughter, Helen Eigenberg, considered them her best friends when they taught at old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Helen absolutely adored Ana Christina, and when Helen left this earth for heaven at age 60, she still had a picture of Ana (the only picture) on her chest of drawers in the bedroom. Helen described Juan as brilliant

Don & Joan Eigenberg - May 22 at 04:50 PM

CR

“ I like to think my uncle always had a soft spot for me, just last Christmas, we were all gathered at my mom's house and he approached me out of the blue; if you know anything about this Lessan crowd, you know mostly everyone's pretty chatty and they like to speak at all times. He shushed a few people because he just wanted to talk to me, he asked about my life - not concerned - just attentive. At the end he told me he was just glad I was doing okay. Don't know why, but that really stuck to me, just letting me know he cares. And I know he did. Rest in peace my dear uncle. You left a footprint in my heart. Your nephew, Carlos.

Carlos Reyes - May 22 at 03:20 PM

DK

“ There are no words to describe the immeasurable loss in our community and the Caboose family. Juan was more than just a customer who came in everyday; Juan was a friend, a confidante, a transportation method for Gloria’s delicious cooking, and someone who you could always count on to be there for you and push you to do better. Juan consistently showed up for those of us at Caboose with home cooked meals, a generous tip, and a lending ear. Seeing him walking up to the restaurant from his car, decked out in a ducky shirt and a grin on his face, made every shift better and a little bit lighter. When he came in, he never asked for much — just a sweet tea, the news channel on, and someone to catch up with on the latest at Caboose. When he wasn’t chatting or enjoying one of the few rotating meals he ate, he was never without his phone in hand — either with a new article from Ana, a cute video of Frances, a news website pulled up, or Gloria’s name on the screen calling him. His love for his family was contagious and we became friends with Ana and Gloria, through the wonderful things that he told us — even if we hadn’t met them yet. He was like a father to all of us and treated us like his family. To know Juan, was to be loved, cared about, listened to, and fed. Juan is truly irreplaceable but the lives he touched will forever be changed. Juan inspires me to be kind, generous, community-oriented, and caring for others. The positive impact Juan had on my life is something I’ll always cherish and be thankful for. Juan’s memory and spirit live on through those of us who were fortunate enough to know the wonderful man he was. My sincerest condolences to his family.

Danielle Kuzel - May 22 at 02:11 PM