

WestHollywoodPatch

GOVERNMENT, THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES

Weho Activist Shirley Roberts Dies at 79

Local leaders share memories and condolences about the longtime political fundraiser and city Human Services commissioner.

By **Anne Louise Bannon** December 9, 2010

West Hollywood political activist and commissioner Shirley Roberts died Tuesday of lung cancer after a brief illness. She was 79.

A longtime political activist and fundraiser in Los Angeles, Roberts served on the West Hollywood Human Services Commission from 1993 until her death, with a two-year absence starting in 2001.

"Shirley Roberts was an amazing woman," West Hollywood Mayor **John Heilman** (http://westhollywood.patch.com/local_facts/mayor-john-heilman) wrote in an e-mail to Weho Patch. "Her commitment to progressive causes was unwavering. She was a friend and supporter of so many elected officials across Southern California. Her influence spanned many generations and extended far beyond West Hollywood. She will be deeply missed."

Roberts was born in Los Angeles in January 1931, the daughter of Bernard and Esther Roberts. She attended Fairfax High School and graduated from UCLA with a degree in business administration. Her career as an activist began in 1944, when she co-chaired the American Youth for [Franklin D.] Roosevelt organization for Los Angeles County.

She later went on to support Tom Bradley for mayor of Los Angeles and worked on his staff. It was during that time, County Supervisor **Zev Yaroslavsky** (<http://zev.lacounty.gov>) recalled, that she supported his run for the Los Angeles City Council, in spite of Bradley's preference for another candidate.

"We go back to the [George] McGovern [presidential] campaign. She was her own woman. She spoke truth to power," Yaroslavsky said.

In fact, Roberts is credited with helping to elect countless local politicians including Los Angeles City Councilman **Paul Koretz** (<http://www.paulkoretz.com/>), Los Angeles Mayor **Antonio Villaraigosa** (<http://mayor.lacity.org>) and Congresswoman **Karen Bass** (<http://karenbass.com/index.php>).

She was among the original team of West Hollywood residents who supported incorporating the city, and in addition to the Human Services Commission, she served on the West Hollywood Election Reform Task Force.

"I just found her to be a loving, caring individual," said Sam Baxter, who worked with Roberts as head of the Human Services Department for the city.

Roberts is survived by her son Chuck Henry and countless adopted family members and friends.

Memorial services will be held at 3 p.m. Sunday at Congregation Kol Ami, 1200 N. La Brea Ave. in West Hollywood. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made in Roberts' name to the National Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles Branch or the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center Transgender Economic Empowerment Project.

Did you know Shirley Roberts? Tell us in the comments.

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COMMENTS (1)

Waris Hussein

4:27am on Saturday, December 11, 2010

Shirley Roberts was a much valued neighbour . She was always cheerful and thoughtful and her optimism influenced all who knew her. She will be sorely missed.
Waris Hussein



