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## Laguna Woods Councilwoman Brenda Ross dies at 92

She was a tireless advocate for seniors.

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By ALEJANDRA MOLINA / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

LAGUNA WOODS - Councilwoman Brenda B. Ross died of natural causes Saturday in Laguna Woods at the age of 92. She is survived by her husband, four children, two daughters-in-law and two grandchildren.

A Memorial Celebration has been scheduled for Monday, March 23, from 2 to 4 p.m. at Clubhouse 7, 24111 Moulton Parkway, Laguna Woods.



Brenda Ross

"She was absolutely tireless. She was just a very enthusiastic, tireless individual," said Laguna Woods City Manager Leslie Keane. "She was a senior citizen advocate."

Ross served as City Council member since Laguna Woods was incorporated in 1999. Ross was also instrumental in defeating an El Toro airport. Most recently she was serving as the mayor pro tem following her re-election in November 2008 for a fourth term. She was Laguna Woods' first female mayor and the oldest mayor in the United States (she served twice, in 2000 and again in 2005). As a four-term councilwoman, Ross fought for additional grant dollars that enabled Laguna Woods to provide transportation, social service, energy efficiency and household hazardous waste pick-up programs for all of its residents.

"She was wonderful lady," said Mayor Bob Ring who worked with her throughout the cityhood process. "She set an example for people for ages to come."

"She's advocated for senior independent living," Ring added about the speeches she had done regarding preventing falls and accidents.

Ross was a persistent and passionate working at the city, county, state, and national levels to ensure senior-related issues were addressed. At the time of her death, she also was serving on the following boards, committees and

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commissions: Orange County Fire Authority Board, Orange County Trauma Intervention Program, Orange County Senior Citizens Advisory Council, Housing Committee, Fall Prevention Strategic Plan Committee, Orange

County Elder Abuse Committee, Orange County Mental Health Strategic Plan Committee, California League of Cities Community Service Policy Committee, and Ethics Task Force, Human Relations Commission Member, Orange County Library Advisory Board, California Foundation on Aging and the California Leadership Alliance and the Coastline Community College Gerontology Advisory Committee.

Keane also noted Ross' dedication to living a healthy lifestyle by engaging and challenging residents in the community to exercise.

A former teacher, homemaker, volunteer and academic administrator, Ross "retired" at age 65 to take up what became a career as a senior-citizen advocate. Ross worked for more than a decade (1982-1991) as an instructor for AARP's 55 Alive Driving Program and was an appointee to the Orange County Area Agency on Aging (1985-1998) and was its first female president. She also served on a variety of its councils and committees from 1983-1999. In addition, she served on the Ombudsman Program for the Council on Aging and the Area Agency on Aging Council of California and as its president in 1999. She was appointed by Gov. George Deukmejian as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in 1995.

Ross also was a retired associate dean of Continuing Medical Education for UC Irvine (1975-81). She served as a consulting psychologist with the Huntington Beach Police Department (1974-75) and as a school psychologist for the Boston public schools (1965-1974). During 1948-1974, while raising her children, she spent her time actively volunteering in community activities like the League of Women Voters, where she served on executive committees in Los Angeles; Washington, DC; and Chestnut Hill, Mass. She had a life membership in the PTA and was an active member of the Women's Auxiliary for the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C.

In 1942, Ross was in the first class of 400 women officers trained by the Army for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. She wrote their first physical training manual, which led to fitness training positions all over the country. During her time in the Army (1942-46), Ross attained the rank of major, and served in Des Moines, Iowa; Chattanooga, Tenn.; New York; and Frankfurt, Germany. When World War II ended, she served as dean of American Studies at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland and as medical director of the American Hospital in Paris before her honorable discharge from the Army in 1946

Ross earned bachelor of science (1938), a master of education (1942), and doctorate of education (1974) degrees, all from Boston University.

In lieu of flowers or donations, Ross wished to challenge and encourage all those who loved her to get involved in senior-citizen issues as a way to memorialize her enthusiastic and unceasing efforts.

Contact the writer: 949-837-5200

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