



## Portrait of a Pacifica Spark Plug ~ Good Deed Doer Sheila Hyman



Written by Jean Bartlett, November, 2020  
(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)

### **HYMAN, SHEILA BERKE (1931-2015)**

In putting together this story on Sheila Hyman, her friends and family were not at all at a loss of words in describing this woman who made such a good difference in their lives and the lives of so many.

"She was a motivator."

"She was passionate."

"She was involved."

"She wasn't afraid to speak her mind."

"She was so much fun!"

"And she lived by her personal philosophies," her youngest son, Rob Hyman, said, "Treat others as

you want to be treated. Love and support your family and friends. Travel is fun and educational."

Perhaps one of the most humorous examples of Sheila having an opinion and doing something about it was the Do-Not-Resuscitate Order, DNR, that she penned to ensure her final wishes were observed. Her friend Jackie Vercelli witnessed the document and even now, when Jackie thinks about it, it still makes her laugh.

"I was laughing when she asked me to sign it," Jackie said. "I didn't really think she meant it and then she had it notarized. I thought, 'Oh! I just signed that!' But that document was so her!"

*DNR*

*Sheila Hyman*

*Dated: April 7, 2005*

*I, SHEILA BERKE HYMAN being of sound mind and body, do not wish to be kept alive indefinitely by artificial means. Under no circumstances should my fate be put in the hands of peckerhead politicians who couldn't pass ninth-grade biology if their lives depended on it.*

*If a reasonable amount of time passes and I fail to sit up and ask for a scotch and soda, it should be presumed that I won't ever get better. When such a determination is reached, I hereby instruct my children and attending physicians to pull the plug, reel in the tubes and call it a day.*

*Under no circumstances shall the members of the Legislature enact a special law to keep me on life-support machinery. It is my wish that these boneheads mind their own damn business, and pay attention instead to the health, education and future of the millions of Americans who aren't in a permanent coma.*

*Under no circumstances shall any politicians butt into this case. I don't care how many fundamentalist votes they're trying to scrounge for their run for the presidency in 2008, it is my wish that they play politics with someone else's life and leave me alone to die in peace.*

*I couldn't care less if a hundred zealots send e-mails to legislators in which they pretend to care about me. I don't know these people, and I certainly haven't authorized them to preach and crusade on my behalf. They should mind their own business too.*

*If any of my family goes against my wishes and turns my case into a political cause, I hereby promise to come back from the sea and make his or her existence a living hell.*

\* \* \*

Irving Berke, originally "Berkowitz," and Rose Rosentock, both from New York, met in San Francisco. On September 8, 1929 the couple married and in the 1930 U.S. Census, they can be found living with Irving's folks at 3264 20th Street, San Francisco. These were the earliest days of the Great Depression.



On July 12, 1931, Sheila, the eldest of Irving's and Rose's three children, was born. Elaine came along in 1933 and Robert was born in 1945.

"My grandfather was getting his medical degree during the Great Depression and times were tough," Rob said. "I have heard stories that food was scarce and my grandmother may have been malnourished. The only family member working was Irving's sister, Ann, who was a school teacher at St. Anne's Elementary School (in San Francisco's Sunset District). For some time, her paycheck supported the family."

← Sheila, age 14 months.

Sheila's dad became a podiatrist.

"His office was across the street from San Francisco's Golden Gate Theatre," Sheila told this writer in a 2014, *Pacifica Tribune* interview. "When there were shows in town, he took care of all the performers. He taught us about the beauty of everyone. We did not know prejudice."

It should also be noted that Sheila's dad, born in 1908, and 33 years old when the United States entered the Second World War, served as a U.S. Coast Guard Reservist with San Francisco's Port Security Force during the War.



Sheila and her mom, 1932.



Sheila and her dad, 1935.

On January 9, 2015, Sheila wrote down her San Francisco school memories, from 1935 through 1949, for her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

*"When I started school my folks would walk me there," Sheila noted. "After first grade, we moved and I went to another school where we walked also. It was three blocks away. We would play outside until the bell rang, then would line up, say the Pledge and march inside to one of Sousa's marches. Our desks had inkwells, most of us were very obedient and respected the teacher. If we did something really bad, our parents had to come to school and then we were in deep trouble from our parents. They would ground us, or take away a toy, or forbid us to listen to our favorite radio programs. We did not have cell phones, TV, games online or computers. We played outside. We had roller skates, bikes, wagons, and flexies (Flexible Flyer sled). We played hide-and-seek and kick-the-can, or went to the playground and played basketball, or tennis, or just rode on the swings and seesaw.*

*As we went to junior high, we had spelling bees and math bees. We were taught how to keep our minds active and we really learned. Many of us belonged to the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts and we earned badges for doing tasks. As the War was on, we sold stamps and bonds. We had art classes, drama classes, sewing, cooking and shop classes. Music always was a big draw. We would have rallies, or go to the auditorium and watch movies of the symphony or ballet. Saturday was movie day and if we were good, some of us took dancing lessons or piano lessons.*

*Our milk was delivered by a milkman and so was ice until refrigerators were available. On Fridays, a man selling fresh fish would peddle his goods and our folks would buy the fresh food. If we were good in school, we would be chosen to help in the office doing different chores. We also always had a school nurse and a school secretary. As my aunt didn't have any children, she would take me, as a gift, to the children's symphony. Another treat was the Japanese Tea Garden. But that was after the War. Golden Gate Park and the San Francisco Zoo were all free, as well as the San Francisco Museum and Aquarium. We went there often. Picnics were a wonderful Sunday social. We would go to Neptune's Beach in Alameda, Martin's Beach down Highway 1 (Half Moon Bay), or by the Bandstand in Golden Gate Park. Stern Grove in San Francisco was another wonderful way to spend a Sunday. We always did something with the family.*

*I was very fortunate to have lived during these times. Our evenings at home were spent sitting around the radio, listening to classic programs, dramas, comedy, mysteries and cowboys. The most important thing we did was talk and listen to one another.*



Sheila and her sister Elaine, 1939.



Sheila, 1945.

Sheila attended Lowell High School. Located on Eucalyptus Drive in San Francisco's Outer Sunset District, the 1856-founded school is the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi, and it remains one of the City's highest performing schools. Graduating in 1949, Sheila made her school's 1949 "Spring Hall of Fame," where she was highlighted as follows: *"Sheila Berke is the girl who always livens up any class. Sheila is a member of the School Dance Committee, Shield and L (the Girl's Honor Society), and Block L for swimming."* Sheila also worked that year in the Attendance Office, was a Big Sister and served as H-4 Room Representative. Following graduation from Lowell in 1949, she attended San Francisco's public community college, City College.



Meanwhile, while Sheila was attending Lowell High School, a 17 year old named Bernard "Bern" Hyman, from New York's Staten Island, headed out West with his younger brother and an aunt.

"It took them several weeks to get here as the tires kept on blowing out and they had to use many retreads to eventually arrive," Rob said.

It would be seven years after Bern left New York, that he would meet San Francisco native Sheila Berke.

"We met at a dance in December of 1953," Sheila said in the 2014 *Tribune* interview. "Bern was just home from the Korean War and still serving in the Marine Corps Reserve. We married in April of 1954 and were Pacifica residents six months later."

"My dad was an honest, hardworking man who provided for his family," Rob said, noting that it was a twist of fate that led to his dad's 50-year career with the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers (IBEW). "He was changing a fluorescent light at a hardware store when a man said to him, 'Are you in the electrical union?' And

my dad responded, 'What's that?'" The rest, as they say, is history.



Bern and Sheila Hyman, April 10, 1954.

The couple's first home was a small apartment in San Francisco's Cole Valley neighborhood on the corner of Grattan and Stanyan.

In August of 1954, Sheila and a friend took a drive from San Francisco down the coast, to what is today's Pacifica.

"My friend had read that there were homes for sale and she wanted to look for a house," Sheila said in 2008 on the Pacifica Historical Society's award-winning *Footprints of Pacifica* Community television series. This particular episode, Episode 49, titled, "Pacifica Spindrift Players – The Beginning," featured PSP founders Sheila Hyman and Sydney Clark. Frank Winston served as segment host.

"You could get a place for something like \$350 down," Sheila noted. "I saw something we could afford. The next Sunday, my husband and I came down and bought an Oddstad home."

Builder Andy Oddstad, a WWII veteran who served as a member of the U.S. Navy's Underwater Demolition Team, bought most of the ranches in San Pedro Valley and then proceeded to build good, inexpensive homes on the land which he subsequently sold to many veterans and their families. San Pedro Valley, along with eight other coastline communities, became the City of Pacifica in 1957.

Sheila and Bern's first home was on De Solo Drive. The couple bought it in August and moved in when it was finished in October. Sheila's friend, as it turns out, did not buy a Pacifica home.

Author: Jean Bartlett ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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In 1957, the City of Pacifica incorporated.

"Like Nick Gust, I was against Pacifica's incorporation," Sheila said in 2014. (Nick Gust, a multi-Pacifica mayor and an extraordinary community philanthropist, was the son of Greek immigrants who founded Pacifica's famous Nick's Restaurant in 1927.)

"We were a bedroom community of San Francisco," Sheila continued. "We had no big business and no tax basis. We just didn't think we could afford incorporation."

Like Nick Gust, Sheila loved her coastal community and from day one, she involved herself every way she knew she could in making a good difference in her town. She also raised her three boys "full-throttle" on the traits that powered her journey: dedication, involvement and the Golden Rule, "treat all people right."

Bern and Sheila's three sons, in birth order, are: Marc Hyman, favorite son number 1; David Hyman, favorite son number 2; and Rob Hyman, favorite son number 3. Sadly David was taken by cancer in June of 2016.

Rob shared some family memories from the 1960s.

"I remember my mom and dad would get up early and have coffee together. The coffee was made in a glass percolator and the coffee was Folgers in a can. No Starbucks yet, though my mom never did like their coffee!

"Dad would leave the house on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle with his lunch box in one of the saddle bags. Mom would then go back to bed and read the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In November 1963, I clearly remember seeing my mom crying as she read the sad news that President Kennedy had been shot and killed."



In 1960, Bern and the couple's three boys, left to right, Marc, Rob and David, pose with Bern's Harley.

By 1963, Sheila was already many years involved with her coastside community.

In 1959, Sheila and her friend, Pacifican Margaret Moseley, decided that their new city was in need of theater and so they put the word out and called a meeting at the Sea Bowl coffee shop. Ten people arrived to pursue the cause and at the end of their meeting they named their theater group, the Pacifica Players.

"In the beginning when we founded the Pacifica Players," Sheila said in the 2008 *Footprints* interview, "the City was looking through their newly formed Parks and Recreation Commission for activities for young people – and most of us were all young, moving here with young families. There were a number of us, all volunteers, who were interested in the theater and Maggie Moseley said she would bring the idea before the PB&R to see if we could start the Players as a program of the PB&R. Through the Pacifica community service tax that was in existence at the time, the City let us use school facilities for our meetings and then eventually have our plays there. The first performance was in 1959. It was 'The Tender Trap' and my husband had the second lead and I had a very bit part. The second play was 'Born Yesterday.' My husband had the lead in that. He was a good actor. I was not good!

"The first two plays we put on at Linda Mar School. The third performance was a melodrama, 'The Drunkard.' Because we wanted the peanuts and the beers, we couldn't put it on at the school. So we put it on at the Pedro Point Firehouse."

"In 1961, the Baptist Church on Crespi was going to have to be moved because Cabrillo School was going to be built there," Sheila continued. "The child population was booming. The church was put up for bid and our City Manager, Karl Baldwin, was the only one who bid on it. \$50.00! We got the whole building for \$50.00! It cost \$6,500 to move the Baptist Church to the place where it still stands in Oddstad Park.

"Many organizations in town helped to complete all the work that needed to be done on our new theater building. Our Pacifica Mizpah organization did a lot, as did other volunteers, and my husband helped with the electrical. I was on the PB&R then and we paid \$25 a step for the steps leading into the building. The building became the Teen Center, the Senior Center, it was used for preschoolers, and the Pacifica Players used it. It was really a community center building."

In late 1967, the Pacifica Players joined forces with a second Pacifica theater group, the Spindrift Playhouse, and the two groups became the Pacifica Spindrift Players.

Pacifican Sydney Clark, who had taught drama to high school students before she and her young family moved to Pacifica, was one of the founders of the Spindrift Playhouse, which formed in 1965.

"I don't know why we used the word 'playhouse,'" Sydney laughed in the 2008 *Footprints* interview. "We didn't have a playhouse. We performed our first play, 'No Exit,' in the Sharp Park Library's meeting room."

But a few years down the road, both groups realized they would better serve their community as one theater organization. In 1968, Sydney directed the newly formed Pacifica Spindrift Players first play, 'Blithe Spirit.'

"We are very blessed here in Pacifica with a lot of talent," Sheila noted, "which is why we have had such longevity at the Spindrift. We have some incredibly talented people here in town with set design, costume design and of course, acting. In the beginning, there were a few excellent actors but we were sort of amateur. But we tried! Though I do think 'Born Yesterday' was one of the best productions I've ever seen. I wasn't in it, so I can say that. It was excellent!"

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Sheila and Bern remained committed to PSP for many years.

"Both my mom and dad did volunteer work with PSP," Rob added. "And my mom was often behind the scenes selling tickets and raising funds."

In their 2008 interview, Sheila and Sydney made it clear that PSP has become one of the most respected community theaters in the Bay Area and with good reason. And Sheila's sons are sure that she would insist that it is plugged in her story: PSP Theater, 1050 Crespi Drive, Pacifica. Box office and information: 650-359-8002 or online at [www.pacificaspindriftplayers.org](http://www.pacificaspindriftplayers.org).

But PSP wasn't the only thing on Sheila's agenda. She was one of the founders and the first swim teacher for the Pacifica Sea Lions. She was on the San Mateo County Beach Committee. In 1961, she was appointed to the Park, Beaches and Recreation Commission where she served until 1974. A huge advocate of sports, during her tenure with the PB&R Commission, she pushed hard to make sure kids had a place in Pacifica to play sports. That was when White Field, Fairmont and Fairmont West parks were developed along with phase one of Frontierland Park.

She was also a longtime PTA member, willing to put in, as evidenced in the photo below, what was needed to raise those funds.



**Parents Sheila Hyman and Zelda Thompson won the Linda Mar School PTA "pie fight" fundraiser in the early 1970s. This is their victory photo which was apparently followed by a hose down.**

Pacifican Ginny Jaquith first met Sheila in 1964. Ginny – who served on Pacifica's City Council from 1980 to 1992, including three terms as Mayor Pro Tem and three terms as Mayor, began her professional career in recreation with Pacifica's PB&R Department, had a 27-year teaching career in the Recreation and Leisure Studies Department at San Francisco State University, and was recognized and entered into the Congressional Record by Congresswoman Jackie Speier for her long list of community service memberships and activities – discussed her friend Sheila's accomplishments.



Ginny Jaquith, at a 2018 Pacificans Care event, is, like her friend Sheila was, a longtime board member of this all-volunteer, community-based nonprofit organization created to support core social service organizations in Pacifica.

"I arrived in Pacifica in 1964 to complete an internship with the Pacifica Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department," Ginny said. "Sheila was on the PB&R Commission and she soon became a friend and mentor. In fact, Sheila often boasted that if it wasn't for her being on my interview board for a position in the Department, I would never have gotten the job. And she was right! I had a terrible interview and if not for her support, I would not have been in Pacifica for all these years. Sheila's personal commitment to park and recreation, and her significant accomplishments set the stage for the many recreation opportunities that exist in Pacifica today."

Ginny noted that Sheila's appreciation of recreation, and its importance in a young person's life, began when Sheila was in her early teens. She played volleyball, she played basketball and she was a swimmer. In Sheila's and Bern's earliest days in Pacifica, they would often chaperone Pacifica teenagers to different sporting events, such as ice skating, not available in town.

"As her three sons grew, Sheila was actively involved in their sports interests including Pop Warner football, Little League, and Terra Nova's track and field," Ginny continued. "When her children joined the Pacifica Sea Lions Swim Team, she was active in the parent group and served as a judge for most of the swim meets."

Sheila also served on the Bay Area Parks and Recreation Commission and Board Members Council. She also went on to serve on the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission.

"Sheila's leadership at the state level put Pacifica on the map as she worked to create a statewide Parks and Recreation Commissioners organization as part of the California Parks and Recreation Society. She was a charter member of the California Association of Park and Recreation Commission and Board Members Council where she served as their first woman president and received an Honorary Life Membership Award." (In 1971, Sheila was chosen Volunteer of the Year by the California Parks and Recreation Society.)

"On February 28, 2009, it was my honor to induct Sheila in the Pacifica Sports Hall of Fame for her significant contributions to, and ongoing support for, sports and parks and recreation programs."

It hardly seems like Sheila had time to do anything else, but in the early 1970s, she began, what would become, a nearly four-decades-long career in the travel industry. She loved it and she was good at it.

Sheila started her travel career with Henderson Travel in San Bruno. In 1974, she and Bern bought the company. In 1985, they changed their company's name to Tanforan Travel. (The office was located in San Bruno's Tanforan Shopping Center.)

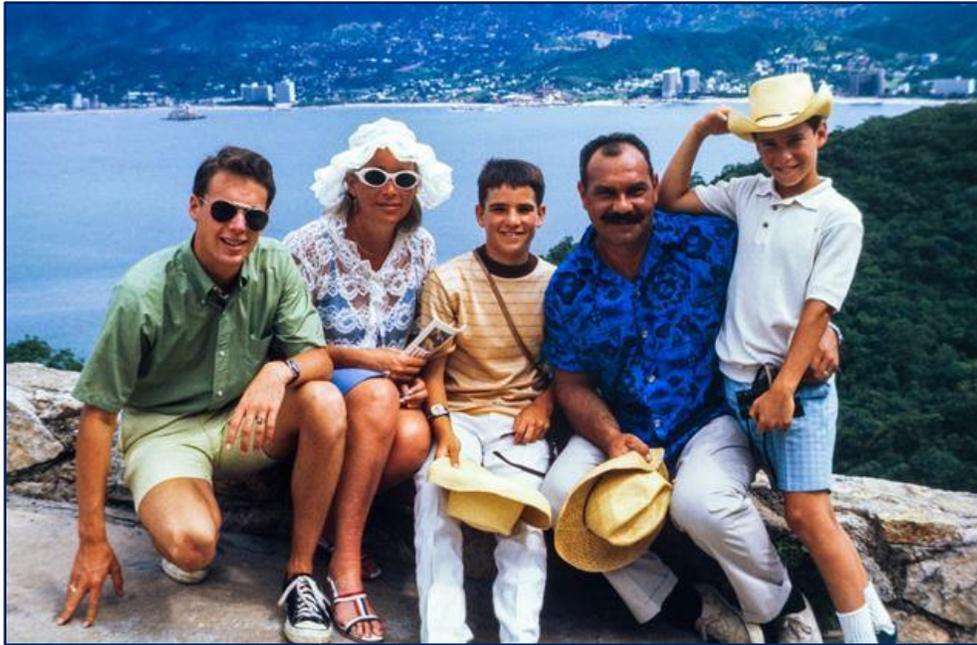
"She was a San Bruno Rotarian," Rob said, highlighting a few of the business/travel hats his mom wore. "She served as president of the Tanforan Merchants Association. She would become the first woman president of the Northern California ASTA Chapter (American Society of Travel Agents). She served as

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President of NorCal ASTA for eight years and as Director following her presidency. In 1999, *Travel Agent* magazine named her one of the most powerful women in the industry."



**In 1969, before her leap into the travel business, Sheila and Bern pose with their boys, Marc, David and Rob in Mexico.**

"I met Sheila in 1978," Sheila's longtime friend and travel industry compadre Jackie Vercelli said. "I went to Henderson Travel to book a cruise. While Sheila and I were talking, we made the connection that she and my husband Don knew each other. Both had worked for the phone company back when she was 20 and he was 21. They had gotten along great and just lost contact. So we all got together for dinner – Sheila and Bern and me and Don. Sheila and I became friends instantly. Plus both Bern and Don had been Marines so there was a lot in common there."

Jackie was thinking of changing careers. Why not the travel industry? Sheila, as it turns out, was teaching a class on the fine art of being a travel agent at Cañada Community College in Redwood City. "Take my course," Sheila said. Jackie did take Sheila's course and began working at Sheila's office in 1980.

"Outside of the office, we were such good friends, we did so many things together; inside the office, I was the employee and she was the boss and we had our challenges," Jackie smiled. "But what I always liked about Sheila was she was very forthcoming. If she had something to say, she said it. We just got along really well because we respected each other."

"When I first went to work for her, I hadn't worked at a travel agency. And she was very helpful in the industry and she truly loved it. She fought for it. She was so knowledgeable. She was my mentor. She meant a great deal to me and still does."

"As a certified travel consultant, my mom's specialty became selling group cruises," Rob said. "She was one of the top selling agents for Princess Cruises." (The cruise ship line, which began in 1965, became the second largest cruise line, by net revenue, in 2018. It was also made famous on the 1977-1987 television series, "The Love Boat.")

"Mom traveled the world and went on more than 100 cruises," Rob continued. "But if you asked her, she would always say the most memorable trip of her entire life was when she and my dad toured the Alps on a BMW motorcycle."



Back in the Bay Area with their Germany-bought BMW motorcycle, Bern and Sheila, head out for an adventure. Circa 1971/1972.

"In 1971, my folks flew to Germany and picked up a new BMW motorcycle," Rob went on to say. "There were at least 30 others who did the same from all over the world. Starting on day one, it rained and rained and rained. But my folks still had a blast! They rode through the Alps and toured with big grins on their faces, riding through Austria, Italy, Lichtenstein, Switzerland and Germany. It was the trip of a lifetime. The bike was later shipped back to the States and they continued to ride. A favorite of my folks was to go down the coast to Pescadero and have a good meal at Duarte's." (Duarte's Tavern, like Nick's in Pacifica, is famous all over the Bay Area and beyond for its menu, but perhaps its most famous dish is its Cream of Artichoke soup.)

Both Sheila and Jackie taught classes on Princess Cruises.

"We had School at Sea and the American Society of Travel Agents promoted it," Jackie explained. "We had a lot of agents take the course, particularly from the Midwest. Many of them had never been to the ocean. But these classes on the cruise ships were so popular because until you do something yourself, you don't know all the ins and outs. On a 12-day cruise, we'd hold classes and give our students, 12 or 15 things to do. At the end of the 12 days, they turned their papers in. All of this was to teach them how to sell a prospective cruise to a client. It was very successful."

Sheila, along with travel industry colleagues Frank Peabody and Martha Fink, co-founded "Destinations in Depth."

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"This was an incredible program," Jackie said. "It sent travel agents country to country to experience how to get around as if they were a tourist. Because they experienced it, it really allowed them to advise their clients on how to travel when they booked through them."

"Sheila at one point served on the Pan Am (Pan American World Airways) Advisory Board," Jackie went on to say. "She was additionally the force behind a number of legislative initiatives in the travel industry."

Sheila was a member of Skål International San Francisco. "Skål is a professional organization of tourism leaders around the world, promoting global tourism and friendship. It is the only international group uniting all branches of the travel and tourism industry." Sheila served on Skål's San Francisco Board of Directors in numerous capacities and was President of the Club in 2001 and 2008.



In 2008, Jackie, also a member of Skål International, and Sheila attended the Skål Christmas party.

Along with being a San Bruno Rotarian, Sheila later became a Pacifica Rotarian as well.

"Has anyone mentioned yet that Sheila's favorite drink was scotch and soda with three green olives in it?" Ginny laughed. "If there was one thing I never understood about Sheila it was, how she could drink that!"

"That" naturally reminds Jackie of a story.

"One time Sheila was sailing on a cruise and was up in Anchorage, Alaska," Jackie recalled. "This was not a work-related cruise. Sheila goes into the ship's lounge and orders scotch and soda with three green olives. The bartender says to her, 'Were you on a ship years ago which went to such-and-such a place?' And Sheila said, 'Why, yes!' It turns out he had made her that cocktail then and had never made another since, or not until that day. He still remembered her!"

Sheila's travel business, which in 2001 reported about \$3 million in annual volume, constantly kept ahead of changes in the travel industry. In the late 1990s, Tanforan Travel began working with two San Francisco radio stations to organize group cruises led by some of the Bay Area's radio personalities.

"We went after this business, proved ourselves and spent money promoting it," Sheila said in a 2001, *Travel Weekly* West Coast story. "That's what you have to do today – you have to spend money to make money."

These radio celebrity trips were phenomenally successful with Tanforan Travel booking more than 200 people per cruise, three times a year.

Jim Lange, a longtime legendary Bay Area radio personality who additionally hosted ABC's "The Dating Game" from 1965-1980, led the first radio celebrity cruise event. Radio personality Carter B. Smith, a KSFO and KNBR radio talk star of the 1960s and 1970s, also worked with Tanforan Travel on numerous cruises. Additionally, radio personality Lee Rodgers, who hosted KSFO 560 AM, from the mid-90s until 2010, was another celebrity cruise draw.

"I believe we did at least five cruises with Lee Rogers," Jackie said, "and he just drew a huge group of people, sometimes as many as 300 passengers."

Sheila and Jackie traveled on quite a number of business cruises together – Alaska, Mexico, the Caribbean and the Panama Canal.

"Sheila was an exceptional Trivial Pursuit player," Jackie recalled, "And wow, was she good at cards."

"By the time she was in her early 20s, my mom was known as a very good card player," Rob said, "and she enjoyed cards her entire life. Story has it that she and her friend Dave Utter took a lot of money from returning war vets after WWII, playing cards! In the 1960s and 1970s, she played a lot of cards with her friends on Standish Rd., here in town. That would be Erma Tonna, Carmen Cooper, Anita Macario, Adrian Sheedy and Shirley Bode. They played Canasta, Bridge, Pinochle, Gin Rummy and of course, Yahtzee. My mom had a good brain. She was very quick to learn and retain."

\* \* \*

"While I was working for Sheila," Jackie said, "there was something else, something very important that Sheila got me involved in, and that is the Pomeroy Recreation & Rehabilitation Center (PRRC.)"

The late Janet Pomeroy, who died at the age of 93 in January of 2012, founded the world's first recreation center for individuals with disabilities in 1952 (renamed in 2003). It was founded as Recreation Center for the Handicapped. Mrs. Pomeroy believed, despite a lot of negative feedback, that people with disabilities could most certainly live productive lives which included enjoying and participating in sports and games and other activities. Located on five and a half acres off Skyline Boulevard in San Francisco, and with amenities which include a wheelchair-accessible pool, a theater, a garden, a gym and a playground, PRRC today serves about 2,000 disabled adults and youth a week.

In the 2001 *Travel Weekly* article on Sheila, Sheila noted that she became active in the Rehabilitation Center, as a fundraiser, 30 years prior. For Sheila, it was her son Rob, "favorite son number 3," who inspired her interest in the Center.

"As a 5-year-old, I had Legg Perthes disease," Rob said.

Legg Perthes is a temporary condition in children in which the ball-shaped head of the thighbone loses its blood supply. As a result, the head of the thigh bone collapses, and the area becomes inflamed and irritated. Symptoms include: limited range of motion of the hip joint; limping; stiffness in the hip, groin, thigh or knee; and pain that worsens with activity and improves with rest.

"I could not walk for five years," Rob went on to explain. "Three years were spent in a wheelchair and two more years were on crutches after one leg healed."

In the early 1970s, Sheila went on a tour of the Center and met Janet Pomeroy. From then on, Sheila was dedicated to their cause. One of the things she did was make travel arrangements to send the Center's theater group, including wheelchair users and a vision-impaired member with a guide dog, to national and international festivals.

"There was always some creative way to get discounted tickets and accommodations for the nonprofit group," Sheila said in her 2001 interview.

In 2001, *Pacifica Tribune* Publisher Emeritus Bill Drake wrote a story on Sheila's involvement with the Center. It was not long after Sheila was recognized by the Center with their highest award, the "Banner of Love Humanitarian Award." A portion of that article is highlighted here.

*... What Sheila saw that first day she toured the Center, was, as she described, "An institution where thousands of kids and adults play with huge delight the games they know they can't play."*

*Sheila Hyman (who was then a member of the Pacifica Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission) was so impressed with the unique approach Pomeroy took to help handicapped have fun too, she started a lifelong practice of personally contributing time and money to the Center.*

*The most recent meeting of Pomeroy and Hyman occurred a couple of Wednesday ago — also at the Center — when Sheila was given the organization's highest award at its 17th annual Banner of Love benefit dinner at its center near the ocean and the zoo at the top of Skyline Boulevard.*

*She was honored before more than 400 people for her 30 years generous support of programs for people with disabilities — through the Center.*

*It was announced later that more than \$70,000 was generated in Sheila's name during an evening of both silent and very audible auctions, conducted as every year by Fred Lacosse and Terry Lowry.*

*Sheila became the first woman to receive the Center's major annual humanitarian award for significant generosity to the programs for 2,000 children and adults with physical, developmental and emotional disabilities in San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin counties. ...*

Along with doing fundraising for the Pomeroy Center, running her travel business, being involved with Pacifica's PB&R, teaching travel classes, seeing each of her sons through Terra Nova High School (which of course followed her involvement with their Linda Mar Elementary School education) – when her eldest was in college, Sheila began hosting exchange students.

"I thought these students would offer my children a wonderful education on the world," Sheila said in her 2014 *Tribune* interview, "and they did." Sheila and Bern hosted nine students.

What else was on Mrs. Hyman's activities list, not necessarily in time order?

From June of 1966 through December of 1967, Bern had an 18-month contract doing electrical construction in Vietnam. While he was able to come home for a visit at about the halfway point, Sheila ran their household 24/7 until his full return. She also managed, during that time, to be the Auction Supervisor of Volunteers at KQED.

Author: Jean Bartlett ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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Portrait of a Pacifica Spark Plug ~ Good Deed Doer Sheila Hyman (page 15)



In December of 1967, Sheila and Bern met in Honolulu, Hawaii, on the last leg of Bern's return trip from Vietnam.

Sheila served on the Pacificans Care Board.

"In 1982, Pacificans Care was formed," Ginny said. "It's a community-based, all-volunteer nonprofit that is dedicated to supporting social services in Pacifica for childcare, seniors, families and groups of individuals in need of assistance. Sheila was one of Pacificans Care first Board members and she remained committed to Pacificans Care throughout her life." (Ginny is also a longtime member.)

But as impossible as it seems with such a profound "activities list," Sheila and Bern always found time to ride that motorcycle, or hop on a plane, or a cruise, or just have fun in their own backyard.



On the road again with Bern and Sheila. Circa 1975.

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"There were so many places in Pacifica that Bern and I loved to go to," Sheila reminisced in 2014. "Of course Nick's was on that list, but these places, the Mori Point Inn and Danmann's Bar out on Pedro Point, they're gone now. One drink at Danmann's and you were knocked on your fanny!

"We used to go to Romano's in Rockaway, best pizza anywhere. I also loved Sam's Trading Post. It was a general store and it had everything. We also used to go to The Vagabond. The regulars had their own beer steins."

In 2014, Sheila also recalled, as she laughed, that she did not miss Pacifica's old coast highway.

"It was a zigzag road and on a foggy night, you had to stick your head out the window and use a powerful flashlight to make sure you were not in danger of falling into the ocean!"

Sheila lost her beloved "Bernie" in 2002. Oh, that was hard but she had her three sons, her three granddaughters and her grandson. She would also add two great grandsons to that list. Family to her was everything – with her friends and volunteerism also at the top of that list, and let's not forget to mention her enjoyment of travel and her exceptional skill at cards.

"Her card playing lasted her entire lifetime," Rob grinned. "When she got her computer she continued to play online throughout the country."

Naturally, there is a story!

"In or around 2010, my mom was in a tournament playing Texas Hold'em," Rob said. "She made the finals and flew to Tampa to play with the group. We got a call that she fell ill and was taken to a local hospital. Which favorite son would retrieve her? By the time I got there, she was in good hands with a fellow poker friend and she did not seem in a hurry to get back home! She simply made friends everywhere she went."

Both of Sheila's sons offered a few extra comments on their mom, just to be sure readers enjoy a full picture on this Pacifica spark plug who lived every day to the fullest.



"She traveled to all of the continents except Antarctica and she did not see the penguins there but that was on her bucket list. She flew on the Super Sonic Transport. When she travelled to Russia back in the 1980s, she swore she was being followed, daily, by the KGB. She met kings and queens on her travels. She met President George H. W. Bush at a travel conference in Norway."

← President George H. W. Bush and Sheila Hyman, Norway, 1990.

"In 1965, she organized Pacifica volunteers following an oil spill at Linda Mar Beach. We all cleaned oil off seagulls."

"She could play the piano and we always enjoyed listening to her play. She could also really jam on the kazoo!"

"She had a deep respect for the military and veterans and proudly and respectfully flew the American flag in front of the house."

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"Could she cook? She knew how to make a mean reservation and she also hired our brother Dave for catering parties as he was the owner/operator of Encore Performance Catering for over 30 years."

"I have to interject here," Ginny smiled. "Her salad in a bread bowl was my favorite course at a Sheila dinner. And my husband Robin and I loved being what Bern called, 'their second class company, always ready to substitute for the dinner guests that could not make it at the last minute!' She was such a special part of my life for so many years. I miss her."

In 2010, the Pacifica City Council of Beta Sigma Phi named Sheila, "Honorary First Lady of the Year." In addition, Sheila was recognized by both California State Senator Jerry Hill and Congresswoman Jackie Speier for her community contributions.

"You've got to give back," Sheila said in her 2014 interview.

"Every morning I look out at the ocean and I think of my family, and friends and the city where I live," she continued, "and I know I am very blessed."

Sheila bid this world adieu on August 5, 2015.



Sheila in 2011, at a large family and friends' event celebrating her 80th birthday.



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

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