



## CDCAN REPORT

**#013-2010 JANUARY 11, 2010 – MONDAY**

**CALIFORNIA DISABILITY COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK**

**ADVOCACY WITHOUT BORDERS: ONE COMMUNITY –  
ACCOUNTABILITY WITH ACTION**

*California Disability Community Action Network Disability Rights News goes out to over 50,000 people with disabilities, mental health needs, seniors, traumatic brain & other injuries, veterans with disabilities and mental health needs, their families, workers, community organizations, including those in Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, African American communities, policy makers and others across California.*

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### **A LIFE THAT MATTERED:**

## **Ruth Shelton's Passing Mourned By Disability & Senior Advocates – Memorial Service Friday 1/15**

***Proclaimed At April 2002 Assembly Hearing On Olmstead Decision***

***Implementation: "I have a voice! I have a mind!. I have a choice! I am of worth!"***



SACRAMENTO, CALIF (CDCAN) [Updated 01/11/10 10:30 PM (Pacific Time)] - Memorial services are scheduled for Friday afternoon, January 15<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento for Ruth Shelton, a beloved and respected disability and senior advocate, and artist, who once proclaimed in 2002 to an Assembly Committee that was

looking at implementation of the 1999 landmark US Supreme Court Olmstead Decision that "I have a mind! I have a choice! I am of worth! I am important! I am a child of God!"

Shelton died Friday morning (January 8<sup>th</sup>) in her home, with hospice services, that she shared with her friend and partner Laura Lee. Shelton, who was born in 1924, celebrated her birthday in December, and was 85 years old. She had been ill for at least the last several months. **[Photo from a couple of years ago, above left of Ruth Shelton (left) and Laura Lee (right)]**

She was known not only as an outspoken advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to live in their own homes, but also as an artist whose work often was displayed in local art shows.

Her passing follows the recent deaths of other widely respected and loved disability and senior advocates in the past year including Bill Young, Donald Roberts, and Joan B. Lee.

### **Shelton Was Longtime Member of Capitol People First**

Shelton was a member of Capitol People First for about 23 years, a widely respected Sacramento-based advocacy group for persons with developmental disabilities.

### **Donations Instead of Flowers To Capitol People First**

Shelton had requested, before her passing, that instead of flowers, that people send donations in her memory to Capitol People First (persons can also send cards and letters offering their prayers, sympathy, thoughts and support to Laura Lee, Ruth Shelton's longtime friend and partner who lived with her – and to Shelton's family also in care of Capitol People First):

**Capitol People First**  
**Post Office Box 601775**  
**Sacramento, CA 95860-1775**

Note: notice in the newspaper may have the previous mailing address for Capitol People First – but donations sent to either post office box will get to Capitol People First.

### **Schedule of Services for Shelton This Week**

January 13, 2010 (Wednesday) 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Visitation

Sunset Lawn Chapel of the Chimes

4701 Marysville Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95838 (between Main and Grace Avenues)

Note: located off I-80 East to Reno, Raley Blvd Exit – near the point where Marysville Blvd and Dry Creek Road intersect.

January 14, 2010 (Thursday) 1:00 PM

Gravesite services

Sunset Lawn Chapel of the Chimes – Sunset Lawn Cemetery

4701 Marysville Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95838 (between Main and Grace Avenues)

Note: located off I-80 East to Reno, Raley Blvd Exit – near the point where Marysville Blvd and Dry Creek Road intersect.

January 15, 2010 (Friday) 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Memorial Services

Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints

2745 Eastern Avenue (between Marconi and El Camino Avenues)

Sacramento, CA 95821

### **Shelton Lived At Sonoma Developmental Center for 45 Years**

At the age of 10 years old Shelton was placed to live at Sonoma Developmental Center where she lived for 45 years. She later was moved, for about five years into a skilled nursing facility in the Sacramento area, before she was able to move into her own home in the community. Shelton had developmental disabilities including cerebral palsy and often needed Laura Lee to help translate her words after she spoke.

After her placement in her own home, Shelton and Lee lived together for close to 30 years. Shelton, who was receiving hospice services before her death.

Shelton was widely known, respected and loved for her advocacy, her art and her friendships with so many across the State.

### **Passing Comes On Day Governor's Proposed Budget Was Released**

Her passing comes ironically comes on the same day that the Governor's proposed State budget was released that proposed spending cuts and reductions in many of the services Shelton received in order to live in her apartment in downtown Sacramento, including In-Home Supportive Services, Medi-Cal and regional center funded community-based services. *[Note: the CDCAN Townhall Telemeetings scheduled Tuesday (January 12) on In-Home Supportive Services and other Department of Social Services budget issues including SSI/SSP, and January 13<sup>th</sup> on regional centers and developmental centers budget issues will be dedicated to the life of Ruth Shelton].*

### **Friends & Admirers Remember the Life of Ruth Shelton**

CDCAN Note: Anyone who would like to share their memories or thoughts about Ruth Shelton, please send to Marty Omoto at [martyomoto@rcip.com](mailto:martyomoto@rcip.com) I will post in follow-up reports and on CDCAN website at [www.cdcan.us](http://www.cdcan.us) Please be sure to send card, notes of support, sympathy, thoughts and prayers to Laura Lee and the Shelton Family – and also send a contribution (instead of flowers, at Ruth's request) in her memory to Capitol People First)

**Sharon Fallis, Disability Advocate (Sacramento)** - Sharon Fallis, a good friend, had just visited with both Laura Lee and Ruth Shelton the morning before she passed away, said the family held a "birthday and happy holidays open house" for Shelton and Laura Lee a couple of weeks ago, with many friends and family stopping by. Fallis, who also is a longtime advocate for people with disabilities, and a former advisor to Capitol People First, said Shelton's passing would be mourned by many people in Sacramento and across the State who will remember "...*what an amazing advocate and friend we had in Ruth*".

Recalling Shelton's life and her love of art, her love of advocacy and her friends, Fallis said, in remembering her, that "...*we believe she is running in her bare feet through heaven, painting masterpieces with her hands, smelling the roses along the way, and laughing in love with all those who have gone before her.*"

**Frances Gracechild, Executive Director – RIL (Resources for Independent Living), Sacramento** – "*Ruth is now with God...how lucky are all the angels in heaven? I am so thankful I got a chance to say good-bye in person last week at a Holiday/Birthday Open*

*House hosted at their home. Ruth was in bed but conscious, awake, and just as dynamically delightful as always. Those of us that know their story and their relationship to RIL (they were the first graduates of the TLC program back in 1985) will need to rally round Laura as she begins the next leg of her life journey here on earth without Ruth...our prayers of thanksgiving for the quality life she led are offered. In my mind Ruth was here on earth with us but never of this earth...she was heaven sent to us. Those of us that loved her will carry her unique brand of self advocacy for independent living in our hearts forever. Watch for all the stories of remembrance that will follow in the days to come...you won't want to miss them. My love to all that were part of Ruth's community and those that remain in support of Laura."*

**Julia Mullen, Deputy Director, Department of Developmental Services** – *"Thanks for the wonderful tribute to Ruth. I knew Ruth as a warm, clever, and smart advocate. I feel so fortunate to have known her and of her. Her "I have worth" speech was incredible. Another founder of Capitol People First, Sandra Jensen, said, "I may be retarded but I'm not stupid." Thankfully, both these women died in their own homes in the loving embrace of family and friends."*

**Jennifer Allen, Capitol People First (Sacramento)** – *"Another wonderful advocate has passed...Ruth was in an institutions most of her life. She fought to live on her own. With help she did so. She was one of the longest members of Capitol People First. Marty, Please keep her and her family in your prayers."*

**Connie Arnold, Disability Advocate (Sacramento)** – *"That was a great tribute. I didn't know Ruth, but what powerful words to remember in a time of great pain, sacrifice, and point of hopelessness with the announcement of the Governor's proposed budget cuts which again disproportionately negatively impact the lives of persons with disabilities and the Independent Living Movement. Great job!"*

**Merle Levy, Disability Rights California** – *"Please give Laura Lee my sympathy."*

**Deborah Dahl, Disability Advocate, Parent** – *"I... remember Ruth Shelton as an incredible person. I think that God gives us these unique angels in life to remind us that the value of a person is not in the outer shell or what they look like on the outside but, rather, what is on the inside. The Heart and Soul of an individual. We all come with to Earth with a purpose and Ruth truly met the mission with grace and class. Her inspiring words will live on in my memories. Surely - to be touch by an Angel of inspiration is event remember forever..."*

**Catherine Kelly Baird, M.S.W. - Friends of Californians with Disabilities, Inc.** ([www.disabilityemployment.org](http://www.disabilityemployment.org)) - *"Ruth Shelton was a very special and amazing lady. Hearing of Ruth's spirit's passing and remembering Ruth...touches me deeply. I was honored to meet her in about 1980 when I was hired by United Cerebral Palsy Association of Sacramento to start its first ever independent living program (we named CLASP--Community Living Arrangements Services and Program). She was one of my very first clients. She was very determined to move out of the skilled nursing facility she*

*lived in and never go back to a State hospital. Back then, we not so controlled by fears about possible litigation and tried some amazingly inventive approaches truly focused on the potential of every human being. We had wonderful times together as we taught each other and she taught the other clients by example. I was thrilled to run into Ruth many years later at the Short Center, where she was creating beautiful art. Later, when I was Director of the California Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, she was one of the artists we invited to show at a reception in the Governor's Office. It touched me so that whenever I saw Ruth, she always remembered our earlier times at UCP with a beautiful smile of recognition and her special laugh. Thank you Ruth for starting me on an amazing career path and positively affecting so many others' lives."*

### **Sacramento News & Review Article Reports On Shelton's Method of Art**

An August 7, 2008 article in the Sacramento News and Review titled the "Short Center North Surreal Art Show" reported on art work being displayed in Sacramento by artists with developmental disabilities, including art work by Shelton. The article covered several other artists but wrote this about Shelton:

*"Ruth Shelton has cerebral palsy. She's in her 80s and in a wheelchair. And she paints with her head. No, literally, with her head. She asks Skinner to show us how she does it. He removes her glasses and straps an elastic band with a long brush at the end onto her head. Skinner puts a canvas a couple feet away from her face. And using the brush jutting from her forehead, she paints. Beautifully. Colorfully."*

### **REMARKS BY RUTH SHELTON TO ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APRIL 30, 2002**

The Assembly Human Services Committee, chaired by then Assemblywoman Dion Aroner (Democrat – Berkeley -14th District) held an informational hearing on the status of California's compliance with the 1999 US Supreme Court "Olmstead Decision" at the State Capitol in Room 4202.

The landmark 1999 US Supreme Court "Olmstead Decision" was the result of two women with developmental and other disabilities from Georgia who filed a lawsuit who wanted to move out of a state facility into their own homes in the community.

The US Supreme Court ruling, under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, required the states to take steps to avoid the unnecessary or unjustified institutionalization of persons with disabilities, mental health needs and seniors.

By 2002, many advocates for people with disabilities and seniors were unhappy with the progress in compliance in California of the landmark decision, with no state plan yet finalized. The state still had no specific entity or task force devoted to Olmstead Decision implementation.

The hearing room in April 2002 was packed with people, including Ruth Shelton and Laura Lee and others, registering concerns or complaints about the delay while Gray Davis was governor, of developing and implementing a state Olmstead Plan – at that point in time, 3 years after the landmark ruling.

Shelton was one of the final persons to provide testimony, titling her remarks “Close the Doors” and with assistance from her partner and friend Laura Lee, gave her moving and eloquent testimony to the committee. The complete text of her remarks is below:

**[CDCAN Note: I was there for this hearing and will never forget how moving and eloquent Ruth’s testimony was, particularly when she said “we are of worth! I am of worth!”**

**She said those things about struggle, injustice and hope and it gave me hope. At the time my sister – who had developmental disabilities – was still alive. I had hope then and when I thought I lost it, I remembered what Ruth said then and since - and I then I remember and know that we can all have hope again.**

**We can all pay tribute to her words and legacy, no matter what one’s views are about developmental centers, state hospitals, nursing homes or community based living. Her life and her words and her artwork are things that we can honor, treasure and remember.**

**Ruth was a person of worth. She also reminded us that we *all* are.**

**Now, when we face yet another crisis in 2010, it is more important than ever before that we remember her words and that special hope she gave us. What a gift her life was to us all. Her life mattered. And she was of worth. - Marty Omoto]**

#### *CLOSE THE DOORS*

*Testimony given April 30, 2002 to the Assembly Human Services Committee informational hearing on Olmstead Decision Compliance, State Capitol in Room 4202*

*I have come a long way.*

*When I was ten years old my parents put me in Sonoma State Hospital.*

*They had four little kids and another on the way.*

*This was during the depression.*

*I lived at Sonoma Developmental Center for over 45 years.*

*I was asked to live with a foster family in San Francisco.*

*The Foster Mom died of a drug overdose.*

*I moved into a Skilled Nursing Facility in Sacramento because there was no other place to go.*

*I lived there for 5 years.*

*It was certainly not much of a life.*

*I had no choices about anything.*

*I was told when to eat. What to eat.*

*Where to go and when to go there.*

*They did not know I was an artist.*

*They did not know that I could sing.*

*They did not know that I had the right to vote.*

*But I showed them.*

*I think people should have respect for one another.*

*Just because we look different or talk different*

*doesn't mean we don't understand what is going on.  
We are of worth.  
We have good minds and good ideas.  
Let us have a voice in the decisions which effect us.  
I now live with my best friend Laura Lee.  
We live and work together as a team.  
I use In Home Support Services.  
Alta Regional Center pays for my transportation.  
And they pay for me to attend the Short Center North  
where I am an artist, performer, and teacher.  
As a member of Capitol People 1st,  
I know a lot of people who need services to live in the community.  
We need homes we can afford.  
We need Supported Living services & choices in providers.  
Each person's support needs are different.  
Today there are a lot more choices than when I was a child.  
But even with all of the choices that we have now.  
Why do we still need institutions?  
Why do we still have state hospitals  
when they deny people their freedom?  
I have a voice!  
I have a mind!.  
I have a choice!  
I am of worth!  
I am important!.  
I am a child of God!  
Close the State Hospital!.  
And open the doors to community living.  
Thank you.*

**RUTH SHELTON'S OWN STORY FROM 1999: "WHERE THERE'S A WILL – THERE'S A WAY"**

This is a longer version of Ruth Shelton's story, which was written (as told to Kristin Hart) in 1996. The story below was reprinted from the Summer 1999 PAI Newsletter #68 (Protection and Advocacy, Inc., now known as Disability Rights California or DRC). Thanks to Merle Levy and Margaret Jakobson of Disability Rights California, for providing this reprint. Donna Zurfluh, who was the newsletter editor back when the Summer 1999 issue was printed, noted in the newsletter with Shelton's story that "This story is written exactly as it was told to Kristin Hart by Ruth Shelton. The sentences and wording have not been changed, as this is Ruth's story, not ours!"

***WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY!***

*By Ruth Shelton as told to Kristin Hart – Written in 1996 (re-printed in CDCAN Report #013-2010 from the PAI Summer Newsletter #68 published originally in the Summer of 1999)*

*I was born on the 21st of December in 1924. When I was a baby I stayed with my grandmother in Layton, Utah. My Mom and my Dad moved to Lassen County in California. My Dad moved so he could find work. It was during the Depression and in those days jobs were very hard to find.*

***I used to go after them in my rocking chair***

*My Mom had three other children besides me. When my grandmother died, my Mom came back to get me and she brought me back to California. In those days they didn't know anything about crippled people. After my Mom took me home she got me a rocking chair because they did not have wheelchairs like they do now. With God's help I learned to get around the house in the rocking chair. Especially when my sister Barbara and my brother (Jon D) used to tease me and I used to go after them in my rocking chair. When I was close enough I would kick them.*

***They called us "feeble-minded" in those days***

*And someone told my Dad about Sonoma State Home because they didn't have any school for people like me. They called us "feeble-minded" in those days. My Dad put me in Sonoma. They did not have programs like they do today, besides I lived in the mountains. My Mom had her hands full with four little kids and no help with them. We were very poor in the dark ages, that's why my Dad took me to Sonoma. I was ten years old.*

***I met two crippled girls who taught me how to read from the books***

*They put me on a ward with kids my age until they gave me an IQ test. After my test they put me with the older people and my "type" of people. I met two crippled girls. They taught me how to read from the books. My Mom sent me the old school books that my sisters and brothers used. I learned to read from them.*

***The only people who would take me, or anyone like me, were black people***

*In the late forties times started to change. They opened one ward for school. They put me on the ward for school and that's where I met Henry Gibson. He lives near me now. I lived there for five years. Rolf Williams came along and I was the second one who needed help to be placed in a family. The only people who would take me, or anyone like me, were black people. I had to wait for awhile.*

*Finally, they found a lady and a man that would take me in San Francisco, They had to help me walk up the stairs and I could walk with their help. The lady had two boys and two girls. Her husband was not well.*

*They started a workshop for crippled people.*

*Two years later her husband died, that was in the late forties. Something happened to Pauletta, she was not the same after her husband died. She went to pieces. She did not give us enough food to eat because she was on drugs. Nobody knew she was on drugs.*

*We moved to Galt so we could go places. She was not mean to me, but she was mean to other people and she shouted at them. It made me nervous. I did not tell anyone because I did not want to go back to Sonoma.*

### ***Something was wrong with Pauletta***

*One morning my roommate Bea helped me up and dressed me. We got up at 9:00 a.m., but Pauletta did not get up. At 11:00 a.m. she still was not up so I saw somebody go by the window, so I asked my roommate Bea to open the window and I called for help because I did not know how to call 911.*

*One of Pauletta's friends came by the window and I told them something is wrong with Pauletta.*

*They came in the house to look around. They opened her bedroom door and they found her dead from an overdose.*

*They had to call my social worker because Bea and I needed to find a new place to live because we are both crippled. Pauletta's friend took us in and took care of us. She was a very good lady. I do not know what happened to the boys.*

*The lady kept Bea and I for one year. I had a very bad asthma attack and went into a nursing home.*

### ***I saw the Easter Seals Telethon find someone to move me***

*One Sunday I had the TV on. I saw the Easter Seals Telethon find someone to move me to Sac City—they did. I moved to the orphan's nursing home. When I first moved there it was different. The people living there were middle-aged women and men.*

*Five years after that they moved the old people out to another place and they made room so young people could live there. They also started having crafts there. The first class there was a painting class. That's where I learned to paint.*

*A month later, I went to Easter Seals for five to six years.*

### ***I wanted to get a real education***

*Then I wanted to get a real education so I went to American River College. I knew I was too old, but the school counselor told me they would take me anyway. I went and I got all Bs. I went to college for five or six years.*

*One year I went into the office and the counselor Larry talked to me about what I was interested in.*

*Before I go on, if anyone remembers "The Waltons" that was like my life. That is why they had to put me away.*

*When my Mom become pregnant with her fifth child, they started me in independent living programs.*

*Laura Lee came to "The Gardens." We went to the independent living company. When they were to put Laura and I in TLC, I was wondering what Laura Lee could do for me. When we got together Laura Lee grew up fast.*

### ***My sister Barbara thought I had fallen in love with John***

*They put us on Bell Street in an apartment. That is where we met John. He took us places. I didn't know he had two different personalities. I felt like a teenager. I guess I acted like Maya when she gets excited. My sister Barbara thought I had fallen in love with John. We went places for five years, then he started to change.*

*When he took me out we were going along and he popped me alongside my head. That happened three or four times.*

*I didn't want to move of that apartment because there was a washer and dryer. On Saturdays Laura would wash our clothes.  
One day my sister came and I was crying. She asked me what was wrong. I had to tell her John hit me. She told me she'd tell my social worker if I didn't, so I did. I moved out. Laura is with me too.  
I go to the Short Center a lot. I have been coming to the Short Center for a long time. I live on the right street. Henry Gibson lives there too. I wish Henry had a talking box like Frankie so I can understand Henry when he comes over. Laura K. is moving to our apartment complex too.  
I am 72 years old now. I kept my teeth for a really long time, but this year [1996] I went to the dentist and they took x-rays over the holidays. That's when they went to pull my teeth and my gums because they were so bad. I let them go too long because I painted with my mouth. I told a doctor do you have to give me an operation on my gums? He told me if they don't I won't live long because of all my painting. I wanted to keep on. I was concerned. I wanted people to know I not so retarded as I look.*

**THE END**

*Addition to story per Ruth Shelton's request:  
When President Roosevelt was president, things started to change because he was crippled too! I have reached the golden age. I've lived two different lives. I don't know how long before I will depart from this life.  
Maybe that's the reason I was put down here. To show people how to take care of a cripple. They used to call it that in the golden days.  
I want to thank Kristin Hart for helping me write this story. I told her my story and she wrote it down. I want to thank Short Center teachers for making my life good.*

**URGENT!!!!**

**PLEASE HELP CDCAN CONTINUE ITS WORK!!!**

We need your help. CDCAN Townhall Telemeetings, reports and alerts and other activities cannot continue without your help.

To continue the CDCAN website, the CDCAN News Reports. sent out and read by over 50,000 people and organizations, policy makers and media across California and to continue the CDCAN Townhall Telemeetings which since December 2003 have connected thousands of people with disabilities, seniors, mental health needs, people with MS and other disorders, people with traumatic brain and other injuries to public policy makers, legislators, and issues.

Please send your contribution/donation (make payable to "CDCAN" or "California Disability Community Action Network):

**CDCAN**

**1225 8th Street Suite 480 - Sacramento, CA 95814**

paypal on the CDCAN site is not yet working – will be soon.

MANY, MANY THANKS TO the Easter Seals, California Association of Adult Day Health Centers, Valley Mountain Regional Center, Toward Maximum Independence, Inc (TMI), Friends of Children with Special Needs, UCP of Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, Southside Arts Center, San Francisco Bay Area Autism Society of America, Hope Services in San Jose, FEAT of Sacramento (Families for Early Autism Treatment), RESCoalition,

Sacramento Gray Panthers, Easter Seals of Southern California, Tri-Counties Regional Center, Westside Regional Center, Regional Center of the East Bay, UCP of Orange County, Alta California Regional Center, Life Steps, Parents Helping Parents, Work Training, Foothill Autism Alliance, Arc Contra Costa, Pause4Kids, Manteca CAPS, Training Toward Self Reliance, UCP, California NAELA, Californians for Disability Rights, Inc (CDR) including CDR chapters, CHANCE Inc, , Strategies To Empower People (STEP), Harbor Regional Center, Asian American parents groups, Resources for Independent Living and many other Independent Living Centers, several regional centers, People First chapters, IHSS workers, other self advocacy and family support groups, developmental center families, adoption assistance program families and children, and others across California