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John Holland, former councilman, dies at 76



Dead at 76

John C. Holland, who represented the 14th District on the city council for 24 years, gazes from city hall toward Northeast Los Angeles in this picture taken several years ago. He died Tuesday at Broadview Sanatorium at the age of 76.

Died Tuesday night after short illness

Former 14th District Councilman John C. Holland, who represented Highland Park and Eagle Rock in the city council for a record-setting 24 years, died Tuesday night at 9:10 p.m. at Broadview Christian Science Sanatorium.

Mr. Holland had been in ill health for several weeks, and had been at the sanatorium, located at 4570 Griffin Ave. in Montecito Heights, for several days. He was 76.

A private funeral service will be held at Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills and the veteran lawmaker will be buried there. In lieu of flowers, the family asks memorial contributions to the Northeast YMCA.

Mr. Holland is survived by his wife, Alice; two daughters, Mary E. Neeb and Mrs. Helen Osterberg; three grandchildren, one great-grandchild, two sisters and one brother.

Fourteenth District Councilman Arthur K. Snyder, who served as Holland's field deputy for eight years before succeeding him in office in 1967, was out of town this week in Tokyo.

SNYDER STATEMENT

However, his office issued the following statement:

"I am deeply grieved to learn of the death of my longtime friend and political mentor, John C. Holland. I gained my training in government during the eight years Mr. Holland gave me the privilege to serve the people of the 14th District as his field deputy.

"John Holland was the epitome of that which we like to see in our public service; honest, sincere, hardworking, intelligent, and above all a friend to all his constituents.

"I don't know a person in our district who ever said he didn't like John C. Holland. He was also a devoted husband, loving father, and a man who diligently followed his religious beliefs in all his acts."

NATIVE OF TEXAS

Mr. Holland was a native of Bartlett, Texas. He attended the University of Texas, and Stanford University, receiving a pre-legal bachelor's degree from Stanford in 1917.

He was a veteran of army service during World War I. He abandoned the study of law to open Holland Electric in Highland Park in 1919.

He was involved in the reform movement to recall Mayor Frank Shaw in 1938 and was a campaign worker for then Judge, later Mayor Fletcher Bowron.

Bowron appointed him to the L.A. City Board of Fire Commissioners in 1942. He resigned this post the next year to seek his first term in the city council, challenging incumbent coun-

John Holland dies

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cilman Edward Thrasher, a 12-year veteran.

Holland's clarion call during the campaign and throughout his more than two score years on the council was "to conscientiously strive to fairly and efficiently represent the entire 14th District."

So popular was he with voters that he was elected to 10 council terms in primary elections, never having to face a run-off election. When Holland first announced his intention to seek a seat on the city council he had already left his mark in Highland Park.

He had served two terms as president of the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce, had served on the board of directors of the Highland Park Kiwanis Club, and in later years he also became very active in Northeast YMCA leadership.

In the 1943 primary election Holland defeated Thrasher and a third opponent, Harold Shield, winning 8916 votes to Thrasher's 5750 and Shield's 890. John Holland took office in July, 1943.

A two-year council veteran in 1945, Holland said he would seek a second term. He was opposed by a single candidate and won handily. His name came up again in 1947 and he received more votes than his four opponents combined to win a third term.

The story was the same in 1949. Holland again defeated Thrasher and a third candidate for his fourth straight victory in a primary election.

In 1951 Holland sought his fifth term and was opposed by six other candidates. Again he won handily in the primary election.

A sixth term was sought in 1953, defeating two candidates.

Only one man in 1955 opposed Holland who set a city council record for council longevity at that time. The terms were extended to four years and Holland wouldn't have to run again until 1959 — which he did.

Holland in 1959 had occupied the 14th District for 16 years and was still going strong as he announced he would seek an eighth term. He continued his reign in 1963 by defeating two attorneys.

In 1967 he announced he would not seek re-election. He retired at the end of his 10th term, leaving behind 24 years of councilmanic service to the northeast community which had been his home for more than 45 years.

His record for service was tied last year by Councilman L. E. Timberlake, who retired in the middle of his term.

Upon hearing of the death Wednesday, city council president John Gibson, currently the veteran on the 15-man body, said:

"I was indeed sorry to hear of the death of former councilman John C. Holland. I served on the council with him for practically 15 years, and in all that time he was a real influence for stability.

He was the best finance committee chairman the city ever had, and throughout the years he served on the city council, he diligently worked in the interests of the city.

Councilman Holland was a great family man, and was deeply devoted to his wife and children. He believed in prayer, and practiced the Golden Rule in his day-by-day activity. After his retirement, he dropped into the city hall to visit with me quite often, and I always enjoyed seeing him periodically. We shall miss him."

At Holland's retirement testimonial dinner-banquet in May of 1967 at the Ambassador Hotel a special representative of Gov. Ronald Reagan, Vern B. director of the state motor vehicle department, presented the former councilman with a scroll extolling his honesty, dedication and devotion of public service.

Scrolls also were presented Holland from the chambers of commerce of Highland Park, Eagle Rock and Hollywood, plus a special scroll from the L.A. Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Actor Glenn Ford served as

the honorary chairman of the banquet which attracted an estimated audience of 500 people paying tribute to the long-time councilman.

The theme of the evening might easily have been "honesty and integrity," for one speaker after another stressed these qualities of Holland as they came forward to present the councilman with plaques, scrolls and letters of appreciation.

Resolutions were presented by Supervisor Ernest E. Debs, Councilman L. E. Timberlake, Councilman Gilbert Lindsay, State Senator George E. Danielson, Fire Chief Raymond Hill, and Parks Manager William Fredrickson.

MAYOR'S PRAISE

At the dinner, a statement by Mayor Sam Yorty was read to the assembled audience, "As Mayor of Los Angeles, I have cherished his friendship and respected his advice and judgment. I shall miss his leadership in the council. I hope I may continue to have the benefits of his wise counsel for the good of our city and its people."

Former Council President John Timberlake, who retired last year with just enough time to equal Holland, also praised the late councilman. The two share the record for the longest tenure on the city council.

His testimonial statement read, "He is a man of integrity; when he is beaten on an issue he is courageous; when he is victorious he is modest. He is an ideal public servant; a man you can trust, and he is respected by every member of the city council."

Holland received numerous standing ovations after the remarks of his many admirers.

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Former councilman dies

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It was obvious the crowd of old friends and supporters were genuinely touched by the tribute to their longtime elected representative.

NOTICEABLY TOUCHED

Holland, noticeably impressed by the accolades, told the large crowd that the rewards of public service are not in the money received, "but in the appreciation such as you have shown tonight."

Among those dignitaries present was former Mayor Fletcher Bowron, since deceased, who was invited to the speaker's rostrum to reminisce about his days with Holland.

Bowron recalled that he had appointed John Holland to the city fire commission shortly after he was elected mayor in 1938. He recalled that he had attended a meeting at the Highland Park American Legion Hall where he mentioned that he was looking for good men for commissioners and that Holland's name was recommended to him. The late mayor said:

"People in public life sometimes make the wrong decisions but selecting John Holland for the fire commission was one of the best decisions I ever made."

CHAVEZ RAVINE

Veteran observers at city hall remember Holland with affection for his concern about taxpayer money and with respect for his lengthy battle to try to prevent some 300 acres of city land from being used for the Chavez Ravine baseball stadium.

Early in his city council career, Holland became chairman of the council's finance committee. In this role, he became known, especially behind the scenes, as the watchdog of the city treasury.

The 14th district councilman was economical in administering his own office, using only one councilmanic field deputy, Art Snyder, his successor and present councilman, when other councilmen had three deputies on their payroll.

Holland also ran an economical office, restricting himself for many years to one secretary, Miss Thelma C. Tyne, who retired when Holland left office, and an occasional young girl clerk or clerk-steno.

As for the Chavez Ravine fight against Dodger owner Walter O'Malley, Holland made up his mind that exchanging the 300 acres of city land for the 10-acre unused Wrigley Field, was not in the best interests of the city.

brunt of the battle, with appearances on radio and TV whenever they could be arranged.

It was during these strenuous years of 1957, '58 and '59 that the sturdy councilman first showed signs of aging. It was common for him to make three or four speeches an evening, to any group which would listen to his side of the Chavez Ravine issue, and then appear early the next morning for a breakfast meeting and another speech before participating in a stormy city council session starting at 10 a.m.

It was about this time that the veteran city father's hair turned from gray to white, but he still carried on with considerable vigor up until his retirement from the council in 1967.

HONESTY, INTEGRITY

Even Holland's worst enemies never dared breath a word of scandal about his integrity and honesty. He conducted his own private life with the same frugality and thriftiness which marked his decisions on city finances.

After he retired to private life, one of his happiest moments came when the rebuilt auditorium at Franklin High School was named after him. His friends said then that it was fitting he should be remembered with affection and pride in his declining years, rather than to wait until he had passed on.

Holland was born in Bartlett, Texas, and made a big issue of this during the fluoridation debates. As a Christian Scientist, he opposed any medication in the drinking water in frequent speeches he alluded to the large amounts of natural fluorides in the water in his home town.

Holland said it was his experience that fluoridated water was unhealthy, and he said he could prove this because the town of Bartlett taxed the residents in order to take the fluorides out.