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Long-Time South Bay Senator Bob Beverly Dead at 84

Robert G. Beverly, a Manhattan Beach Republican who represented the South Bay in the state Senate for 20 years died October 16 after a long fight with Parkinson's Disease. He was 84.

His stentorian voice, courtly demeanor and silver-white hair would have made him Central Casting's choice to portray a senator were he not one from 1976 until forced out by term limits in 1996.

A labor-supported, pro-business moderate who was pro-choice and opposed to offshore oil drilling, Beverly epitomized the old school Republican lawmaker who was equally at home hoisting a few at David's Brass rail or Frank Fat's with his closest friend, the late GOP Sen. Ken Maddy of Fresno, or then Governor Jerry Brown.

"He always worked toward trying to develop some kind of a responsible solution to a problem and that included being willing to compromise with those who might oppose him," former GOP Gov. George Deukmejian told [The Daily Breeze](#) in an obituary of Beverly. "He was very well-liked, very well-respected."

Beverly carried the 1994 legislation creating limited liability corporations in California and was a key Republican vote on California's first ban of assault weapons in 1989.

Prior to moving to the Senate, Beverly was an Assemblyman for nine years and served as minority leader in the lower house.

"I didn't enjoy being minority leader," Beverly said in the 1997 oral history for the California State Archives. "I didn't like being that partisan. I never had a great deal of interest in budget and finance matters."

His 1967 Assembly race cost \$20,000. His final Senate re-election campaign in 1992 — \$400,000.

A long-time member of the powerful Senate Rules Committee, Beverly was often the go-to author of bills relating to legislative administrative matters.

He carried the bill creating the Legislative Office Building on N St. across from the state Capitol.

In 1989, he authored the measure increasing legislative pay from \$40,800 to \$44,894, receiving criticism from both the media and his colleagues.

In his oral history, Beverly recalled one of the biggest critics of the raise was then GOP Assemblyman Dick Mountjoy.

"His wife sent me a thank you note," Beverly recalled.

Beverly routinely presided over the Senate, his deep voice and polished delivery investing majesty in the most mundane statements.

"Lunch is served in the lounge," from Beverly was a command, not an announcement. The disdainful tone in which he said, "Pass on File," seemed like an attempt to shame a senator into reconsidering and taking up his measure.

Beverly, an artful and crafty lawmaker, admitted in his oral history to appreciating a certain amount of "gamesmanship." Few legislators, then or now, were as skilled at "low-balling" a measure.

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A common Beverly stratagem was to present his bills at the beginning of a committee hearing, usually before a quorum was present. Offer a brief low-voiced explanation, thank the committee and then depart.

His dry sense of humor was routinely evidenced.

In 1992, Beverly was part of a group of legislators, lobbyists and businessmen on a European junket. While eating at highly rated restaurant in Brussels, several lawmakers expressed concern over what might be written about their attendance on the trip. After a long draw on his vodka, Beverly said, "Just tell them you didn't go but you paid your own way."

Maddy, Beverly's long-time seatmate and fellow tennis player, related how Beverly asked him whether he was going to vote in favor of a measure to lower the legal blood alcohol level from 1.0 to .08.

"Of course, Bobby," Maddy said. "We have to."

Replied Beverly: "There were days we woke up at .08"

In a 2000 [Sacramento Bee](#) obituary of Maddy, Beverly said: "For 30 years, he was about the closest friend I had. He was loyal to me and I to him."

The two men were almost inseparable – Beverly said they ate dinner together three nights a week – and were routinely to be found at Frank Fat's, the Capitol eatery.

Asked Maddy's skills as the Senate's GOP leader, Beverly said in his oral history: "He made (the caucus) think they were really influencing what he was doing. He'd always do what he wanted to do on his own but the caucus got the feeling they were truly being consulted."

He said then Gov. Ronald Reagan was "the most interesting and exciting" of the governors he worked with. "He had that celebrity aura about him and you always knew where he stood."

Beverly decried the increasing conservatism of the Republican Party, fearing it would doom it from winning majorities.

"We've got to be more moderate," he said in 1997. He said his strong working relationship with Democrats – he supported former Assembly Speaker Willie Brown for mayor of San Francisco – stemmed from "I could be counted upon to vote and keep my word."

A Massachusetts native, Beverly joined the U.S. Marines in 1943 but never saw duty overseas.

A Los Angeles lawyer he lived in Manhattan Beach – two short blocks from the beach — instead of the San Marino, La Canada, Pasadena addresses of most of his fellow partners.

"When you came home at night it was a different world. You'd relax in a pair of shorts and a sweatshirt. You could go to a fine restaurant and dine in that attire. The gentleman sitting next to you might be a nuclear physicist or a surf bum."

Prior to his election to the Assembly he was a member of the Manhattan Beach City Council and served as the city's mayor.

His wife, Bettelu, his three sons – Bill, Bob Jr. and Brian – a daughter, Barbara, 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren survive him.

A memorial will be held at 10 a.m. Oct. 24 at American Martyrs Catholic Church in Manhattan Beach.

(Editor's Note: The chief correspondent of California's Capitol is fond of this Bob Beverly story. Late one evening, at the corner booth at Frank Fat's, Beverly, Maddy and Bill Campbell, a former Senate GOP leader, are drinking. The chief correspondent and Mark Watts, now a lobbyist, enter and are invited to join them. At the time, Maddy is the husband of Norma Foster of Foster Farms fame and he's talking about the family's operation, the "chicken ranch," as he calls it.

"What's the best job at the chicken ranch?" the chief correspondent asks.

"Rooster," Maddy says without hesitation. "You can go all day and all night as long as you want."

Without looking up from his vodka, Beverly replies: "Just like it was here before Prop. 9.")

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