

Services Held for Former Gresham Mayor McRobert

She led the delegation to establish Oregon's first sister city on the African Continent

Norma Jean Augusta "Gussie" McRobert died March 8, aged 79. McRobert served as Gresham's mayor from 1988 to 1998.

"She was a dynamic person, easy to communicate with because she was very clear in what she had to say," said Bobbie Foster, executive editor of *The Skanner News*. "She was a strong leader and a very compassionate person. She knew what she wanted to do and she set out to get it done."

Shane Bemis, the current mayor, said the City of Gresham will fly its flags at half-staff for 10 days, one for each year she served as mayor.

Born in Blanca, Colorado, McRobert grew up in Montana and southern Oregon. She moved to Gresham in 1955. After starting her career as a nurse, she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in communications. She worked in radio and television as a producer for Oregon Public Broadcasting, and then started her own PR firm, Rx Communications, before entering politics.

As Gresham's mayor she worked on the regional growth boundary, and left a legacy that includes 55 miles of off-road recreational trails and 700 acres of irreplaceable conservation areas, including buttes, wetlands and creek corridors. A champion of citizen involvement, McRobert gave neighborhood associations a voice in her administration.

She also wrote a book about her difficult childhood, "To Hell and Back: Survive and Thrive." In the book she relates her journey



McRobert not only met with male leaders in Nigeria, she investigated women's issues as well.



Gussie McRobert in Owerri, Nigeria in July 1991 as part of the delegation to recognize Owerri and Gresham as sister cities

to success, despite having an alcoholic father and a mother who, "hated me with a passion."

She first married Dr. Marshall Brown, but the couple divorced after 10 years. Her second marriage, to Gresham businessman Chet McRobert, lasted for more than 40 years until his death in 2003.

Foster and McRobert became friends through their membership in the Portland chapter of Women in Communications Inc. They traveled together to Owerri, Nigeria, in July of 1991, as part of the delegation to recognize Owerri and Gresham as sister cities.

Under McRobert's leadership, Gresham was the first city in Oregon to develop a sister city relationship with an African city.

"She was a pioneer," said Bernie Foster, Publisher of *The Skanner*, who also traveled to Owerri with the Gresham delegation. "She was bold and she didn't take any nonsense."

While in Owerri, McRobert wanted to meet with local women and hear about their lives without official intermediaries. At a time when all the official leaders were men, this was a radical concept. Bobbie Foster said McRoberts got her way.

"She declared a women's meeting to hear their concerns and she made it known in no uncertain terms that all the men should leave the room," Bobbie Foster recalled. "A number of women expressed that they wished they had a way to obtain seed

money to start small businesses. They said that would help them care better for their families."

McRobert is survived by five sons: Marc,

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Skip, Bradley, and Timothy McRobert, Gregory Brown; and three granddaughters, Kristina Smith, Kindel Brown and Heather Robertson

Services will be held at 3 p.m. Wednesday, March 14 at Gresham City Hall Council Chambers, 1333 N.W. Eastman Parkway.

We want to hear from you

Public hearings on fares and service

TriMet is facing a \$12-17 million shortfall. Tough budget choices are ahead. Share your comments on proposed service cuts and fare changes effective September 2012. Tell us what's important to you.

Monday, March 19, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Clackamas Town Center, Community Room, Lower Level next to Management Office
12000 SE 82nd Ave.

Tuesday, March 20, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Beaverton Library, Auditorium
12375 SW 5th St.

Wednesday, March 21, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Portland Building, Auditorium
1120 SW 5th Ave.

Thursday, March 22, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Multnomah County East County Health Center, Sharron Kelly A & B
600 NE 8th St., Gresham

Tuesday, March 27, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Multnomah County Library, North Portland Branch
2nd Floor Meeting Room
512 N. Killingsworth St.

Visit trimet.org March 15 for information on the revised proposal.

Communication aids

If you require a sign-language interpreter or other communications aids at a meeting, please call 503-802-8200 or TTY 503-802-8058 (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

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New Song Community Center
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