

## Barbara K. Roberts



A descendant of Oregon Trail pioneers and a fourth generation Oregonian, former Gov. Barbara K. Roberts has carried forth the tradition of trailblazing and innovation. Roberts began her years of public service as an advocate for disabled children as she fought for the educational rights of her autistic son. While Roberts was governor (1991-1995), Oregon was recognized by *Financial World Magazine* as the seventh best-managed state in the nation. Roberts was recognized as a strong advocate for environmental management, a national leader for human and civil rights, and among the nation's foremost reinventors of effective government during her governorship.

While Roberts was governor, Oregon won the prestigious "Innovations in Government Award" from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government in recognition of the nationally acclaimed Oregon Benchmarks Program. Roberts used the Benchmarks measurable goals as an integral part of her budgeting and planning efforts while governor.

Before being elected governor, Roberts was elected Oregon's Secretary of State (1985-1991) as well as serving as an elected member of the Oregon House of Representatives (1981-1985). Roberts also has served as a county commissioner, an elected school board member, and an elected community college board member.

Roberts taught for several years at Portland State University's Hatfield School of Government as an associate director of leadership development, retiring from that position in 2004. Before that, she had a five-year association with the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She served as director of the Harvard Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government, and later as senior fellow to the Women and Public Policy Program. In 2001, The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University honored Roberts with "The Alumni Public Service Achievement Award."

An active and dynamic public speaker, Roberts focuses on issues of leadership, women in politics, environmental stewardship, and death and grieving. She is a member of the board of trustees of Population Action International in Washington, D.C., and Innovation Partnerships in Portland. Roberts is also a member of the Advisory Councils for the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Compassion in Dying, and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Celebration. Roberts also serves as the co-chairwoman for the Oregon Public Affairs Network and on the advisory committee for the Robert Straub Library at Western Oregon University. Roberts is a past board member for the Oregon Hospice Association, the Women of the West Museum in Boulder, Colo., and the Human Rights Campaign in Washington, D.C.

One of Roberts' main focuses since 2001 has been establishing and fundraising for Portland Relief Nursery, a child abuse prevention agency that will serve at-risk, low-income families in Portland's St. John's area. As finance chairwoman for the past two

years, Roberts helped spearhead fundraising totaling more than \$3 million. The center opened in October 2002 and plans to serve more than 100 families annually.

Roberts' book, *Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology: A Guide for Facing Death and Loss* was published in 2002. Her book has received numerous accolades from readers and reviewers alike. The book editor for the *Salem Statesman Journal*, Dan Hayes, selected Roberts' book as one of the "Top 10 Oregon Books of 2002." Hayes noted, "This book offers the gifts of comfort, compassion, wisdom, and hope. No matter what your beliefs, this book has comfort and wisdom for you."

In 2002, Roberts received the "Children's Cancer Association Award" for her book. *Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology* has become a favorite among hospices, often offered to hospice families, and is now used by university classes on death and dying. Her book is now in its third printing. In 2004 *Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology* was published in Japanese by President Sha Publishers of Tokyo.

Presently, Roberts is working on her autobiography, which focuses on her years as governor and her unique trailblazing role as the first woman elected Governor of Oregon. Roberts was married to Oregon State Sen. Frank Roberts, who died in 1993. She has two adult sons, Mike and Mark Sanders.