

Patricia Walkup

December 18, 1946–June 6, 2006



Tribute

Program

September 10, 2006

Contributions are being accepted to permanently place in the Green a memorial to Patricia and the community effort it took to remove the Central Freeway. Please make checks payable to HVNA Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 423978, San Francisco, CA 94142-3978. Inquiries please call Robin Levitt at 863-5302/rflevitt@prodigy.net

Musical Performance: Kathleen Hollingsworth

Ceremonial Procession: San Francisco Zen Center

Introduction: Paul Olsen

Speakers: Tom Ammiano, Jose Luis Moscovich, Lee Walkup, Kathy & Leroy Looper, Robin Levitt

Dedication of the Green

Musical Performance: Mariachi Tequilla

Refreshments

Special Thanks: Modern Tea, Frjtz Gourmet Belgian Fries, Arlequin Cafe, Neighborhood Parks Council, Recreation & Parks Department, First Baptist Church, and Black Graphics

Photos: all photos except page 8 by Barbara Wenger

Patricia Walkup

Born in Texas, Patricia is someone I will always remember as a gracious person, full of Southern charm, and surrounded by good friends who treasured her kind consideration, warmth, and wonderful humor. Her smile brought sunshine to our days.

Patricia represented the best of activism. She worked hard to make the world a better place. You will hear from others about her accomplishments in making Hayes Valley a safer and more livable neighborhood: her work to reduce criminal activity; her advocacy of affordable housing; her appreciation of the contributions of the tenants in the neighborhood and a fighter for their rights; her bare bones work to clean up parks; her thorough understanding of transportation options; her leadership to replace the Central Freeway with the Octavia Boulevard. She was unique in her ability to organize people to work together effectively to create change. People often said it was impossible to say "No" when Patricia called for help. And if by chance you said "No" the first time, it didn't end her calls to you.

Being in public office, it is rare to meet someone like Patricia who was so selfless and dedicated. Her "agenda" was always the greater good. Her opinions were valued by everyone; we knew she did her homework and thought things over from different perspectives. She didn't let her deteriorating health slow her down and she continued to speak with passion about community planning issues and people.

Even though we won't be getting her phone calls, at all hours of the night, I know she'll be with us because she wants us to carry on her work.

Patricia, with you by our side, we will continue to fight the important fights!

But we miss you.

Tom Ammiano
San Francisco Board of Supervisors



Exactly One Year Later

Patricia was able to focus quickly on what she thought were the basic aspects of an issue. When she spoke, you were convinced that she was speaking for her peers, for her neighbors – that she was reflecting how the common man and woman would actually perceive the issue out on the street.

At the same time she was able to grasp the complexity of the issues. She realized that all issues come in shades of meaning, that there's never quite a black and white outline to any urban policy discussion. But she was tremendously effective at staying focused on what she wanted to achieve, and she had a tenacity that kept her at it for months at a time, even when her health began to slow her down.

Patricia was indeed a realist. She understood the importance of appealing to the average person on the street. Though what she was supporting – tearing down a freeway to build a boulevard – seemed like a radical idea to many, she never presented herself as a defiant radical. She was a civilized person, always polite and measured. She saw the value in being perceived as an average person who just happened to be advocating for something different. In the end, that was what helped her to win people over to her views.

Patricia and I worked closely on the Central Freeway replacement project over many years. She embraced the boulevard idea with a passion, and she was always calling me with questions, eager to learn more about the technical aspects of the project. She wanted to make sure it would work well and be a source of pride for the neighborhood and for the whole city. Despite this interest in the details, she was a big-picture person, and she knew the importance of keeping the establishment on its toes. Last year on September 10, the day after the boulevard opened, she called me and left an extended message asking whether I was already working on the study to tear down the rest of the Central Freeway and extend the boulevard. I suppose that about sums it up.

Patricia was a model of constructive activism. Octavia Boulevard is a fitting memorial to her life and her contributions to making San Francisco a better place for everybody.

Jose Luis Moscovich
Executive Director, San Francisco County Transportation Authority

Patricia's Roots

Patricia and I grew up in Kilgore, Texas, a conservative, bible-belt town in central East Texas where there were more oil derricks than people – and telephone numbers only had four digits. We had good parents and a grandmother close-by, who taught us to be honest, hard working, and respectful of others. We received a good education in the segregated schools of the 1950s and early 60s. The only diversity we knew was Anthony Romeo's Italian restaurant where Mr. Romeo would take us into the kitchen for a fresh meatball. We were certainly unaware of any ethnic backgrounds among our friends.

Culturally, we were fortunate to have Mrs. Rildia Bee Cliburn as our piano teacher, since Mr. Cliburn worked for the Sun Oil Company. We crawled through a hole in the fence at our elementary school where Mrs. Cliburn would be waiting in her backyard. Patricia was 11 when their son, Van, won the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow. He had a New York ticker-tape parade and was on the cover of *Time*. After that, Mrs. Cliburn got calls from Van during our lessons from exotic places like Paris and London. Van taught occasionally when she was ill. He once told Patricia she had "digital dexterity" – of which she was very proud. I'm sure those piano lessons taught Patricia that there was a big world outside our little oil-field town and that anything was possible through hard work.

Our family vacation to San Francisco in 1962 made an indelible impression on Patricia – as she eventually would live here most of her adult life. She loved this city, its rich diversity, and the spirit of community in the neighborhoods. She worked hard to make Hayes Valley a place where people of all incomes could live peacefully together without crime and traffic – much like that idyllic East Texas town from which she came. Patricia accomplished many things for the common good during her lifetime, but never forgot her roots and the people from her childhood who helped shape her view of the world. Patricia was a good sister and confidant to me. And I will miss her.

Lee Walkup
Patricia's brother

Our Friend

My wife, Kathy, and I first met Patricia in the mid-80s when she came to volunteer at the Cadillac Hotel. At first, we were a little leery of taking on the responsibility of mentoring someone who was so 'green' – Patricia had absolutely no experience with the kinds of problems we were confronting every day in the Tenderloin. She spoke to us with great simplicity and nobility; she felt that people are the same no matter where they live or what they do or don't do for a living. She cared about the poorest of the poor and wanted to do right by them – and volunteering at the Cadillac would allow her to contribute in some small way. We were convinced.

She brought with her an optimistic belief in people. I often say to new trainees that God gave us two hands – one for helping ourselves, and the other for helping others. Patricia believed that good manners required you to put yourself in the other person's shoes. She also deeply felt she could make a difference. This belief was one that she was probably born with but also was one that she honed throughout her life. In working for Hayes Valley, this ability and belief became a loudspeaker, an amplifier for not only Hayes Valley but for San Francisco.

Patricia was a great volunteer for the Cadillac Hotel. She came steadily three days every week for over four years. Patricia would walk from her apartment – then at 29th and Noe – to Eddy and Leavenworth to get to the Cadillac by 10 A.M. At the Cadillac, Patricia learned how to organize and mobilize large groups of people through our monthly Crime Abatement meetings. She redid my Rolodex and duplicated one for herself! She helped organize Neighborhood Clean-Ups and then assisted in fundraising and proposal writing for a new San Francisco YouthBuild program. Through our collective efforts we were able to gather over \$750,000 and open the first YouthBuild program in San Francisco with Patricia acting as one of its administrators. She became known then as an especially clear-headed, intelligent person who had that special spark of genius and great talent for eloquently saying just the right thing at the right time.

It was during this time that Patricia became our closest and dearest friend – sharing and exposing us to her many interests such as playing the piano, being a rock and roll/blues groupie, an eclectic lover of music whose tastes ranged from classical to Texas bluegrass to Spanish mariachi. She was a collector of costume jewelry, vintage hats and purses, as well as a serious food aficionado. I really miss my good friend and truly wish she could be here today. But our friendship lives on forever as a cherished memory!

Leroy Looper

A Great Advocate

On June 6th with the passing of Patricia Walkup, Hayes Valley residents lost a great advocate, a great neighbor and a great friend. There are many adjectives that come to mind when I think of Patricia: tireless, selfless, respectful, dedicated, tenacious, patient, genuine. She was a great listener and had a great talent for building consensus among diverse people with diverse interests. She dedicated most of her last 15 years since moving into Hayes Valley for the betterment of the community.

She was the founder of HVNA and began organizing the neighborhood in the early 90s when Hayes Valley was overrun with drug dealing, prostitution and criminal activity, when break-ins, muggings and shootings were common occurrences here. Many people here didn't experience it and it's hard to believe now. But at that time, if you said that you lived in Hayes Valley people would often sigh and say, "I'm sorry" in response. But working with neighbors and the police Patricia was able to turn that around.

Despite the crime, she always appreciated the neighborhood for its diversity and unique character and strove to maintain that by advocating for affordable housing, balanced transportation, public safety and improved parks. The past few years she focused on planning issues including the UC Extension Project and the Market/Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan working to ensure that future development would compliment the neighborhood.

I got to know Patricia best when we worked together as co-chairs of the three campaigns from 1997 to 1999 to replace the Central Freeway with Octavia Boulevard. The tireless effort and selfless dedication she put into those campaigns was extraordinary. I'll never forget Patricia sitting day after day in the vestibule outside her apartment on Laguna Street organizing volunteers, collecting petitions and counting the 18,000 signatures we had to gather in just a few short weeks to put an initiative on the ballot in 1998 to get rid of the freeway. Without her we never would have won.

Patricia was one of a kind and a model for all of us. She loved Hayes Valley and left a great legacy here. She'll be deeply missed.

Robin Levitt

The following is an excerpt from an interview by Dave Monks published in *The Noe Review*, September 1999. It was a time when Hayes Valley was struggling to overcome its problems of crime and violence – a time when drug dealing, shootings, prostitution and homelessness were a part of everyday life in the neighborhood.

On the Front Line

An Interview with Hayes Valley Activist Patricia Walkup

How did your neighborhood activism begin in Hayes Valley?

I've lived in the city since 1970 and I moved here in 1992. After I moved in, I discovered that there were armed robberies going on in the daytime, right outside my front door, right in front of the UC extension. We were all very concerned, just walking down the street to the corner market was frightening. People were assaulted and robbed all the time.

What action did you take?

Originally we contacted San Francisco SAFE, a non-profit agency. They came out and we organized. One thing led to another, and as soon as we were able to solve some problems on our one little street, everybody on the adjacent streets started coming to our meetings and wanting help. We called ourselves the Laguna-Waller SAFE group. It was little by little.

Where was the criminal element coming from?

They were coming from all over the Bay Area, because this area was known as a place where you could buy and use drugs, pimp or do prostitution. This was also a place where parolees came.

When you started getting active and wanting to reclaim your neighborhood, what kind of reaction did you get from the police?

There had been a lot of other groups who had formed and they hadn't been able to stay together. The crime was so bad it was hard to believe you could change it. It was kind of an area that the police had really written off. No one had advocated that much for this area and I think the police thought that it they could just keep people from killing each other, everything was okay.

There was no quality of life because we had people hanging out on the street 24-hours a day, smoking crack right in public. We had prostitutes addicted to crack performing sex publicly. I kid you not, right in the cars in front of entrances to the apartment buildings, right on people's steps they'd be orally copulating people. And then you'd be walking past them and they'd be saying, "What are you looking at?" It's like you're the ones who don't belong here. Over on Lily Street one lady looked at one of the trees and thought it was booming blue blooms. When she looked closer she saw it was blue condoms hanging from the branches, literally, condoms all over the sidewalks, hanging in the chain-link fences, just nasty.

How did people react to your activism?

A lot of people wanted to see a change, but people were also leaving because the quality of life was so bad and their safety was threatened and because it was just so noisy and filthy.

So we found a really progressive lieutenant from our police station, Lt. Keith Sanford. He was a brand new lieutenant and he came out and we did neighborhood walks where we met at the corner of Page and Laguna streets. We walked all over the neighborhood and for security he had a patrol car. We would get to know our neighbors and we would really take a close look at the community and see what lights needed to be brighter and what bushes needed to be trimmed. We built a real strong group.

We got people involved with reporting things to the police. That was the key to getting all these people who were coming from all over the Bay Area to stay away. We had two parks that were completely overridden with drugs. You could literally see the clouds of crack smoke rising from above the parks. The only people who could see in were people living over the parks. People were trained to look where people were keeping their drugs and to give good descriptions so that every time someone went to the park with a crack pipe, a call went into the police department. That was in about mid-1994.

Were you ever harassed?

People knew who I was, especially drug dealers. If I went into areas, well some areas, they would just leave the street (laughs). I was very



afraid for my personal safety because when I started out I walked around by myself and would talk to people. The dealers cussed at me a lot. They still do.

Who is giving you help?

It's been everybody working together. We've dealt with some of the problem liquor stores here in Hayes Valley very successfully by calling the licensee and the building owner to one of our neighborhood meetings. We had one market at the corner of Haight and Webster that was one of the worst in the whole Western Addition, where drug dealers crowded the sidewalks and shootings took place. We talked to the licensee and told him the neighbors could not tolerate this anymore.

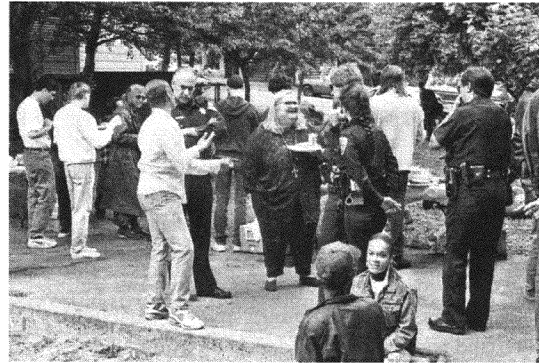
We also offered to patronize his store and asked him to sell things besides malt liquor and potato chips that you just stand on the street and drink and eat. I was amazed at how quickly he cleaned up his store. Working with police, he was able to get stay-away orders on some of the major drug dealers. And then one of the neighbors put in a digital camera that overlooked the street and that picture was hooked up to a web site. The captain of the police station could even look and see what was going on (laughs).

You've also worked hard to see the Octavia Boulevard plan succeed. What does the Central Freeway issue mean to Hayes Valley?

It means to get rid of this awful blight once and for all. It means to be able to see the sky and to see the sun shine and not to have the criminal homeless under the freeway. It also means an end of constant graffiti problems and people who dump all kinds of garbage under the freeway. Under the freeway is a No Man's land.

What is it like to have a freeway running through your neighborhood?

It totally divides the neighborhood. Before the Franklin/Gough ramps had to be destroyed, the freeway went over Hayes Street. The part of Hayes Street that was east of the freeway had spiffy restaurants and trendy shops. People visiting symphony hall would be able to have a nice meal and do some shopping. But no one wanted to walk past the freeway because once you got there everything was dark, grimy and dirty. It was a bunch of drug dealers, prostitutes and pawnshops. So it was just a mess.



But as soon as that section of the freeway came down, people who had very little money took their savings and could open up their store and it became a wonderful little street of independent shop owners. The city owes a lot to these people.

What do you say to political leaders who think the Central Freeway should be rebuilt?

Well, I think the issue for them is not really the freeway. The issue is to try to build political power for their particular group. This rebuilding and widening and doubling the width of the freeway is supported mainly by the SF Neighbors Association and Rose Tsai, a co-founder. I don't think it's a transportation issue. They're trying to get a big citywide win so that they can try to dominate other issues.

What do you think are the best parts of the Octavia Boulevard plan?

It was born of the public process. The people who decided on it were from all the neighborhoods that were affected. The process was public and included representatives from Caltrans, Parking & Traffic, the Planning Department, independent traffic consultants, the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's office. What this [Central Freeway] task force was supposed to do was to balance the needs of traffic and its effects on neighborhoods with other forms of transportation – MUNI, bicycles, pedestrians – and to come up with a plan that best serves everyone. It wasn't a plan just for Hayes Valley. It wasn't a plan just for cars to serve the west side of the city. It was a plan that serves everyone. It was very, very difficult for everyone to come to an agreement – but they did. The vote was unanimous in the end.

What do you like best about the Octavia Boulevard plan?

The aesthetics and the fact that it moves traffic better than the other plans. Our plan also provides northern access to the city. People forget that the freeway originally had ramps that connected to and from Franklin and Gough streets. The retrofit plan doesn't provide any way to go north or south. It's strictly an east-west route, so all the traffic that wants to go north has to go west first and then loop back around. Because the boulevard is a surface plan, it allows for a variety of routes.

What else do you want people to know about the Central Freeway issue?

Supervisor Yaki said something a couple of years ago that has stuck in my mind and that is that everyone in the city, in all of the

neighborhoods, has benefited from the stopping of the freeway system that was supposed to encircle and run through all of San Francisco. Well, everybody's benefited except Hayes Valley. The only reason that this freeway goes through this historic neighborhood, which once consisted of Victorian homes that were demolished to build this freeway, was because it was a poor neighborhood and it didn't advocate for itself. The people in the Sunset were homeowners and they were able to stick together and really advocate for it not coming through their neighborhood. It was the poor people who got stuck with the freeway.

You have worked diligently on behalf of your neighborhood and also on the Central Freeway issue. You have put your own safety at risk. Your battles never seem to end. How do you keep going?

We continue to have success. We've been able to return the neighborhood to the lawful residents. We've just redesigned one beautiful mini-park [Rose-Page] and everyone is really enjoying that. Our larger park, Koshland, is being renovated now. Children who had no land to play on and who've never gardened before will have garden plots in connection with their elementary school. So just seeing people having normal lives will have an effect on future generations. We're trying to break the pattern here. We've had a pattern of violence and poverty. What we've tried to create here is a community that has people of all income levels who can enjoy the same quality of life. I want children here to have the same opportunities as children in other neighborhoods like Noe Valley or Telegraph Hill or the Sunset or the Richmond.

“We’ve really just begun. In another five years you’ll see as much change as you’ve seen in the past five years. In a few years, there will be people who will never know a freeway was there.” – Patricia Walkup

Patricia Walkup was a dynamo who would not stop until her mission was completed. Without her energy and commitment, the Octavia Boulevard may not exist today. I am proud to have had the privilege of knowing her.

– Assemblyman Mark Leno,
13th District

As a large commercial tenant in Hayes Valley, my company and I have been long involved with Patricia Walkup and her work for this vibrantly but authentically rejuvenated area. She and I came here within a year of each other, and saw so many good efforts to improve San Francisco, some successful, some not at all. Much of what has happened successfully in Hayes Valley has been due to her perseverance, her coalition building, and her farsighted vision of urban renewal without the many negative consequences it has wrought elsewhere.

– William Russell-Shapiro
Absinthe Brasserie & Bar, Arlequin Café, and Arlequin Wine Merchant

Patricia was a rare activist who worked to both make her neighborhood better and use the same approach to improve our City. She had a keen grasp of what makes successful neighborhoods.

– Tim Colen
Executive Director,
SF Housing Action
Coalition

Patricia Walkup was a remarkably talented and compassionate person who has left an urban legacy for us all to enjoy. She strongly believed the residents of a neighborhood should have a say in how their community is shaped. She encouraged civic engagement on the grassroots level and then helped create an infrastructure so that the people’s voices could be heard and felt at city hall. She loved San Francisco and by her hard work and passionate commitment to the residents of our city made San Francisco a better place for all of us.

– Marcy Adelman
founder of openhouse

A Great Loss for the City

If you haven't heard, yesterday Patricia Walkup passed away. Patricia was the founder of the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association and worked tirelessly to improve her neighborhood for all people. While neighborhood beautification is an easy cause to generate support, Patricia never shied away from the more difficult issues such as working for affordable housing and sustainable transportation. Her pleasant personality was one of many soft-spoken but hard-working and consistent people in the neighborhood that overcame seemingly insurmountable odds to remove the Central Freeway removed north of Market Street.

I got to know Patricia during the Planning Department's Market & Octavia neighborhood plan. In an age of unabashed NIMBYish behavior, she was a welcoming voice embracing (very Jane Jacobs) the idea that people are good in a neighborhood and, in particular, housing for diverse people is essential.

In her tireless efforts she proved her own quote: "Ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things." Patricia is a great inspiration and the City will miss her voice greatly. To help keep the memory of Patricia, let's dedicate one personal act of community participation to Patricia and help ensure that in San Francisco ordinary people continue to accomplish the extraordinary.

- AnMarie Rodgers, SF Planning Department

"A city's very wholeness in bringing together people with communities of interest is one of its greatest assets, possibly the greatest."

- Jane Jacobs,

*The Death and Life of
Great American Cities*

In March 1994 neighbors came together in response to postings on telephone poles. The sign was about taking back the neighborhood from crime. The meeting was at John Muir School and there were over 100 people in attendance. This meeting was part of a five year grant from the state of California to study substance abuse. It identified nine transitional neighborhoods in San Francisco and Hayes Valley was one of them. This was the beginnings of NIT - AMP (Neighborhoods in Transition - A Multi Cultural Partnership). Patricia was at this meeting.

We identified five areas to work on: drugs, prostitution, policing, youth and parks. Patricia emerged as one of the strong leaders in these areas. Over the next few years, she was relentless in partnering with the police and dealing compassionately with prostitutes, helping to start the first John's Program in San Francisco, with Norma Hotling. She was at the center of every community meeting, listening, questioning, putting people to task.

Patricia found her calling through this work and has left an enormous imprint on the neighborhood. Her spirit lives on in the many people she inspired to be leaders.

- Barbara Wenger, Director, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Parks Group

It was the spring of '99 when I met Patricia Walkup. And not only was I new to the neighborhood, but new to California altogether. I had arrived just a few months earlier from Atlanta, Georgia, and felt a bit like a fish out of water. Having spent my whole life in Georgia, I understood how things worked there. I felt comfortable. I knew the political scene and considered myself quite the "activist," volunteering at least once a month at a local shelter, occasionally working in a community garden, being sure to vote in every election, knowing my neighbors who lived on either side of me. I considered myself a truly concerned and engaged community member. Then I moved to Hayes Valley and met Patricia. Boy, was I wrong. SHE was the true definition of a concerned and engaged community member.



For Patricia, giving time to your community once a month was not enough, nowhere near it. Voting in every election didn't cut it, she recognized that to make real impact, you had to effect what we were voting for. Knowing your immediate neighbors was easy, but knowing the entire community was what it was really about. And her community had few boundaries; she may have focused her efforts on creating synergies in Hayes Valley, but in many ways, San Francisco was Patricia's 'community.' She had strong opinions. She didn't back down from a fight (thank goodness). And although we didn't always agree, she never failed to inspire me with her conviction, her determination and her unfailing energy to move toward her passion of greater neighborhood – a greater community for all of us. Her legacy will continue to impact San Francisco in profound ways for generations to come. Thank you, Patricia, for everything.

– Ashley Hamlett, past president, HVNA

Sadly, San Francisco's Livable City movement lost a great advocate with the passing of Patricia Walkup yesterday. Patricia was a dedicated neighborhood advocate who founded the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, and effectively and graciously worked on behalf of her neighborhood to help it through the difficult yet promising transitions of the past two decades.

I met Patricia over a decade ago, when I was an eager young appointee to the Citizens Advisory Task Force on the Central Freeway. Hayes Valley was then a neighborhood reeling from the depredations of 1950s and 60s traffic engineering and freeway building. It was divided by an ugly double-deck freeway, while many of its surface streets had been co-opted into one-way traffic sewers. Patricia was already well established as a committed advocate for safe streets, working with neighbors and the police to address the criminality and desperation that clustered under the elevated freeway.

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake brought about the removal of the earthquake-damaged Embarcadero Freeway, as well as the Central Freeway north of Fell Street. Hayes Street, freed from the noise, grime, and shadow of the freeway, became much more upbeat. Hayes Valley began to imagine life without the Central Freeway, and Patricia stayed committed through the three ballot campaigns it took to secure the Octavia Boulevard. At last year's boulevard dedication, she remarked (with characteristic modesty) that "Ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things."

Patricia knew that great neighborhoods are diverse ones, and she was dedicated to transforming the Housing Authority's projects on Haight Street from scary, unwelcoming places to the tidy town-homes there today, and was vitally interested in making sure that the residents were able to return after the reconstruction. She also worked to renovate neighborhood parks, and was active in the Octavia & Market planning, where she championed retaining the neighborhood's dense, mixed-use character, building less parking, creating housing for a range of incomes and households, and reclaiming the streets from excessive traffic. She was excited about the future of Hayes Valley, not only for the neighborhood's sake, but as an urbane example for the rest of the city. She was an inspiration, and we will miss her greatly.

- Tom Radulovich, Executive Director, Livable City

On June 6th, San Francisco lost one of its great community leaders, Patricia Walkup. Patricia worked tirelessly and selflessly for a better San Francisco. She was best known for her work to bring down the Central Freeway and replace it with the Octavia Boulevard, an initiative she helped shepherd through three separate ballot measures over the course of over four years.

Everyone who had worked with Patricia noted her incredible tenacity. The word used most often in connection with Patricia was "doggedness." After Prop H, an initiative to rebuild the Central Freeway, passed in 1997, most of the community activists who had worked to defeat the measure were exhausted and emotionally depleted. Although some were willing to give up the fight, Patricia was not among them. Within weeks she was organizing to put another measure on the ballot to repeal Prop H and instead tear down the freeway to replace it with Octavia Boulevard. Robin Levitt, a fellow community activist, neighbor, and friend in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, recalled how "We had to collect 18,000 signatures to get Prop E on the ballot. And Patricia would just get on the phone and call volunteers. She got all these volunteers to go out and get signatures. She would sit in her vestibule for 10 hours a day for weeks while we were collecting signatures. People would bring the petitions back to her and she would count every one and organize them, checking them to make sure the information was complete. I'll never forget that."

Patricia started her career in public service by volunteering at the Cadillac Hotel, a low-income SRO hotel in the Tenderloin, in the late 1980s. Kathy Looper who, along with her husband Leroy (a 1998 Silver SPUR honoree), helped run the Cadillac Hotel, remembers her first impression of Patricia as a woman with a flair for fashion and a sense of playfulness. "Patricia had these beautiful red glasses and beautiful red lipstick and a vintage dress and I thought, 'Here is a woman after my own heart,'" Looper recalled. Soon Patricia was walking from her apartment in Noe Valley to the Tenderloin three days a week to support efforts at the Cadillac Hotel, working with residents and eventually helping to organize crime-abatement meetings of over 150 community members seeking to improve conditions in the Tenderloin. It was through her work in the Tenderloin that Patricia first learned to appreciate the impact that one person can have on her community. "Patricia helped people on a one-to-one basis and thought 'I can help do this on a larger basis,'" remarked Looper.

Patricia certainly had the opportunity to help people on a larger basis after moving to Hayes Valley in the early 1990s. Patricia's concerns about safety in her neighborhood were what led her to get involved in the freeway revolts of the 1990s, and her doggedness was what enabled her to ultimately prevail. Up until the final weeks of her illness, Patricia remained very active in her neighborhood through the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association (HVNA). She worked to ensure that the redevelopment of the Hayes Valley public housing projects was successful, helped push the Market/Octavia Better Neighborhoods plan forward toward what she hoped would be its eventual passage. Jason Henderson, co-chair of HVNA's Transportation and Land Use Committee, commented, "Patricia positioned Hayes Valley as the anti-NIMBY neighborhood. She thought that density, as long as it is graceful, is good. She was very proud of that."

Above all else, Patricia showed that tenacity, graciousness and a capacity to listen, enabled (as she put it) "ordinary citizens to accomplish extraordinary things." Perhaps Robin Levitt said it best when asked to share his thoughts on Patricia's legacy: "You could never say no to Patricia. And the thing was, she was always right."

— Sarah Karlinsky, policy director for SF Planning & Urban Research Association (SPUR)

I chose to move to Hayes Valley because it is a place where one can live comfortably and pragmatically without a car. After living here for a couple of months, I went to a Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association meeting to try to learn more about the people who helped to make my new neighborhood such a wonderful place to live. There I found Patricia Walkup, who promptly recruited me to sign up to get emails for the Transportation & Planning committee.

Soon thereafter I began receiving emails for meetings – it was overwhelming at first, and after a few weeks I was in Patricia's house for a strategizing session. I learned quickly that HVNA was an organization that welcomed change, embraced the concept of sustainable transportation and urban development, and that would not accept mediocrity. After that initial session, I began talking regularly with Patricia on the phone about local land use and transportation issues. Patricia opened up and shared all kinds of fascinating stories and insights with me about San Francisco, the freeway fights, about her roots in Texas, and about good food from New Orleans

Patricia kept at it until the end. I last spoke to her on Sunday, June 4th, two days before she died. She had called about the planning department's "Initial Environmental Review" of the UC Extension project. Having just read it, she asked me to write some comments about analyzing the environmental impact of too much market-rate housing in the neighborhood. Patricia had always been concerned that Hayes Valley was becoming less affordable to people like teachers, artists, city workers, and that the neighborhood would lose its unique character and diversity.

While she believed strongly in infill housing and was even welcoming of new housing across the street from her own home, she wanted new housing to be affordable for the working class. After talking with her for about 30 minutes, I gathered that she was losing her breath and I said that I would let her go so she could rest. But I am sure she called someone else about UC Extension, or 1844 Market, or the other myriad developments unfolding in our neighborhood.

On Monday afternoon, I wrote up our comments on UC Extension. After proofreading and re-reading I wanted to be sure I had properly articulated Patricia's affordable housing concerns and so I called her. She was not there. I left her a message and expected her to call back. She did not. I was on my own.

– Jason Henderson, Transportation and Planning Co-Chair, HVNA

From the Kilgore News Herald, Kilgore, TX Sunday, June 11, 2006

Patricia Ann Walkup

Patricia Ann Walkup, 59, of San Francisco, CA, passed away on Tuesday, June 6, 2006, after a long stay in the hospital. Patricia, daughter of Frances and Dayton Walkup, was born and raised in Kilgore. She graduated from Kilgore High School in 1964, and received her Bachelor's Degree in education from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX, in 1968. She taught public school briefly in Victoria, TX, then moved to San Francisco, CA. She was employed by Allis-Chalmers and Wells Fargo Bank. She also was a grant-writer for Youthbuild, a national non-profit organization that assists young people in completing their education and finding employment.

In the early 1990s Patricia founded the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association in San Francisco. A tireless community activist, she worked persistently to make the Hayes Valley District a safe place to live, as it was a haven for crime. She organized community walks with police officers. After damage to the Central Freeway during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, Patricia lobbied to replace the Freeway in her district with a landscaped, tree-lined boulevard. Today, the beautiful Octavia Blvd. replaces the Freeway, is lined with palm trees and small shops, and ends in a neatly-groomed public park. Plans are pending to name the park after Patricia. Her excellent civic work over many years has been recognized by the Mayor and the City of San Francisco with many awards, including "Patricia Walkup Day". In 1995, Patricia was also commissioned by Texas Governor George W. Bush, into "The Yellow Rose of Texas", an honor society reserved for women from Texas who have made an exceptional difference.

Patricia is preceded in death by her parents, Frances and Dayton Walkup of Kilgore. She is survived by her brother, Lee Walkup of Cheshire, CT; cousins Martha Goodson Libby of Colorado, Rayburn Goodson of Georgia, Sonny Stallings of greater Kilgore; step- sisters Luanne Squier Samuel of Allen, Cheryl Squier Rosson of Marble Falls, Peggy Squier Hembree of Tyler; step-brother Richard Squier of Texas City.

No formal memorial service will be held in Kilgore. A public memorial is being planned in San Francisco.

“Ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things.”
– Patricia Walkup