

Below is the article written by Caroline Dipping about Gordy, which was printed in the San Diego Union/Tribune shortly after his passing on June 30, 2013

Cycling icon Gordy Shields

He started racing bikes in his late '60s

By Caroline Dipping JULY 3, 2013

When Gordy Shields developed bursitis in his back at 50, he hung up his tennis racket and looked for another pastime. His first cycling experience was taking his son's bike for a spin and finding himself in El Monte County Park in Lakeside, some 17 miles from his starting point. Too tired to pedal back home, he called his wife to come get him.

By his late 60s, Mr. Shields was racing professionally and soon after was being hailed as a cycling advocate and an icon who set national age-group records, including in the past few years a blazing 44:53:98 in a national 20-kilometer time trial for riders 90 and older. In April, he was the lone competitor in the 95-plus class of Southern California Nevada Super Master Criterium.

Mr. Shields died Sunday of complications after heart surgery at Sharp Memorial Hospital. The Fletcher Hills resident was 95.

Former San Diego City Councilwoman Donna Frye said she got to know Mr. Shields through his calls and visits to her office to discuss cycling issues, particularly on how to get the road on Fiesta Island into cycling-worthy shape. She likened his passion to the artist who said, 'I can't not paint.'

"That was Gordy. He couldn't not cycle," said Frye. "You could certainly see his passion and dedication and commitment. He was a cyclist, and everything he did was focused on that."

Longtime friend Chuck Gilbert said Mr. Shields introduced him to competitive cycling 25 years ago, and the two entered about 300 races together. He recalled the year they participated in the World Senior Games in St. George, Utah, and, despite the 28-degree weather and 4,500-foot altitude, Mr. Shields led the pack yet again.

"He was 15 years older than me, and I had a helluva time trying to touch that guy's time," said Gilbert. "He was just that good."

Gordon Albert Shields was born on April 20, 1918 in Quincy, Mass., the youngest of two to Leopold Shields and Nellie MacLeod Shields. He graduated from Quincy High and served as a lieutenant in the Navy during World War II. He moved to San Diego County 71 years ago. He earned a bachelor's in education from what was then called San Diego State College, and a master's in family and marriage counseling from the school in the 1970s.

Mr. Shields taught civics and a class called "Social Problems" at Grossmont High School in the 1950s and '60s until he joined the Grossmont College staff in 1965 as a counselor. He retired in 1980.

Mr. Shields told friends he wanted to be remembered as "an activist." For 35 years, he tirelessly pushed for cyclists' rights and worked to improve the Bayshore Bikeway, a five-city, 24-mile bike route around San Diego Bay.

"He was just a class act ... one of the finest gentlemen I ever met," said County Supervisor Greg Cox, who worked with Mr. Shields as chairman of SANDAG's Bayshore Bikeway Advisory Committee. "He was totally dedicated to the biking community and promoting bike routes in San Diego County. He did so much to promote safe cycling and try to encourage bike paths where there could be paths and bike lanes when there couldn't be."

Mr. Shields also formed the group Cyclo-Vets. A decade ago, a \$5.2 million bridge that crosses the Sweetwater River was named in his honor.

Before entering the hospital, he told his daughter of his long "to-do" list for after the operation.

"He said, 'I've got to go to the San Diego City Council and talk to them, and I need to send a letter to every board member of the Grossmont College board,'" said Valerie Shields. "If he didn't like something, if he felt something was amiss, he didn't just bitch about it. He would write a letter or go see somebody."

Mr. Shields is survived by his daughters, Susan McKeown of El Cajon, and Valerie Shields of San Diego; son Gordon Scott Shields, of Lodi; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife of 64 years, Olwyn Green Shields, in 2009, and an older sister.

An Irish wake is being planned for later this month. Mr. Shields' remains will be interred at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. The family suggests donations in his name to a charity of choice.