

2013 Athletic Hall of Fame Honoree



DORIS WALKER TOPSY-ELVORD

Class of 1949

Most people, when they hear the name "Doris Topsy-Elvord", think of the local community leader who was the first African-American elected to serve as a City Councilmember and ultimately Vice Major of Long Beach. Or they may remember Doris for her service as a Harbor Commissioner for the Port of Long Beach from 2003-2008 when she traveled throughout the world building relationships and representing the City of Long Beach. She was the first African American President of the Port of Long Beach Harbor Commission in 2005-2006.

Tonight, however, Doris is honored not for leadership and service, but for her contribution as a student-athlete at St. Anthony High School, where she was the first African-American to graduate in 1949.

Doris Louise Walker's family moved from Vicksburg, Mississippi to Long Beach where she entered St. Anthony High School as a freshman in 1945. She was SA's first and only African-American student at that time.

According to Doris, "I didn't realize I was any different from any of the students at St. Anthony because everybody treated me so well and I made so many friends very quickly. But after a few weeks, I came home from school and my mother asked me, 'Doris, are there any other Negro kids at St. Anthony?', and I had to answer, 'No, I guess there aren't, just me.'" My experience at St. Anthony was great. I studied hard, learned a lot and got involved. I did my best, and it paid off."

During her time at St. Anthony, Doris played three sports: Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Baseball and Varsity Basketball. She was Captain of the Volleyball Team and a member of the board of the Girls Athletic Association, as well as its Vice President. She also participated in a variety of campus organizations such as the Letterman Club, Spanish Club, Latin Club, Glee Club, Sodality and Mass Club. In short, Doris was very involved. She maintained a high grade point average, focusing on academics, but also participated in a wide variety of leadership and athletic activities year-round.

B.I. Mais, who graduated in the same class with Doris, remembers that, "Doris could always beat all the boys in any race. She was fast." And Doris remembers what a joy it was to be part of sports at St. Anthony because, "the boys always came to all the girls' games. They supported us and cheered us on. And we always supported them too."

All this involvement and activity culminated in 1949 with the St. Anthony Girls' High School's Fifth Annual Basketball Tournament.

The Lady Saints swept the Tournament with competition centered in the newly opened Gymnasium for the first time. At the end of the Tournament, Msgr. Bernard Dolan presented the "Player of the Tournament Award" to none other than... Doris Walker and "He smiled at me and that was a first," remembers Doris.

After graduation from SA, Doris attended Immaculate Heart College for one year, UCLA for one year, Cal State Long Beach where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Welfare, and Chapman College where she earned a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Administration. Doris worked for the City of Los Angeles, LA City Serriffs and LA County Probation Department as a deputy probation officer, for 19 years, then for the LA County Sheriff's Department and the California Youth Authority. She retired in 1988 at age 55. Doris and her husband Urlee Topsy had three sons, Gerald, Stanley and Stephen. Stanley and his father have passed away.

Her public service includes a term on the Long Beach Civil Service Commission where she presided as president, Long Beach Unified School District Personnel Commission and was appointed by Cardinal Mahony to the First Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She served on many organizational boards over the years and is a well-known leader in the community, always ready to get involved, to lend a hand. She has met four U.S. Presidents in her lifetime and sat down and broke bread with two. Doris and her husband, Ralph Elvord, live in Long Beach and are the parents of three sons and two daughters. They have six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Throughout her lifetime, Doris Walker Topsy-Elvord has opened many doors for women and for African-Americans, providing inspiration to many. She has received many honors and in 1991 was inducted into the St. Anthony High School Hall of Fame. She also wrote the Small Business Enterprise Program for the Port of Long Beach in 2005. It is the only one of its kind in the U.S.

None of these honors, however, recognized the contribution Doris made as a trailblazer for African-American scholar-athletes, as well as girls' sports, during her time as a student at St. Anthony High School. Many would follow after her, earning their own place in St. Anthony's illustrious athletic history and adding glory to our name.

