

The Frank Truth: A Better Environmental and Gender Landscape



Myra Frank, Photo © John Livzey, 2017

The word *legend* is overused. But in some cases, it's fitting. Myra Frank is one such case. Consider rail transit in Los Angeles County. If you've ridden a rail line in Los Angeles, you can thank the late Myra Frank for helping to make that possible. From the Downtown People Mover in the mid-1970s to the Pasadena Gold Line of today (and the Blue, Green, Orange and Red Lines as well), Frank helped perform environmental work on virtually every major transit project in Los Angeles County for more than three decades. A nationally renowned leader in environmental planning and assessment, Frank practically wrote the book on how these processes should be executed, particularly in California. This is especially true as they relate to transit systems, rail corridors, infrastructure, and historic districts. Her firm, Myra L. Frank & Associates (MFA) led projects in 31 states and received numerous awards for completing complex projects by driving innovation. In many ways, her firm was her legacy. Myra Frank died of cancer in December 2003. But prior to her death, she concluded a merger to form Myra L. Frank/Jones & Stokes (which was in turn acquired by ICF International in 2008), to ensure her employees could continue their work. But Myra Frank's legacy includes more than the seminal transit works in Los Angeles County.

An intellectual force, Frank helped clients strategically employ the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act to get projects built. She trained for these endeavors at Syracuse University, where she earned a BA in Political Science and graduated both Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude. She also received an MA in Advanced Studies in Government-Urban Government from Harvard University, where she was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. And she earned virtually every award and honor an environmental planning expert could in Southern California. But she also did quite a lot more.

Through her involvement with WTS-LA, Frank served in numerous capacities (including co-founding the chapter and serving as treasurer) to advance women in transportation. Furthering that legacy, her daughter, Elisabeth Rosenson, has served as WTS-LA Scholarship chair for more than five years, helping female transportation and planning students receive funding for their education. Frank was also actively involved with Transportation Research Board, serving on the Committee on Historic and Archaeological Preservation in Transportation. Her commitment to helping women was both boundless and tireless. At work locally, in the chapter and nationally, Frank changed the very landscape for women. In that capacity, she also served as an indelible role model to many young women who followed in her footsteps. And that is why each year at the WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards dinner, WTS-LA remembers and honors her work and legacy with two eponymous scholarships, now worth \$17,500. It is a fitting tribute to a woman who paid her own way through college with scholarships and on-campus jobs. She would be proud to see WTS-LA ensuring the next generation of successful women in transportation here in Los Angeles.

