



## **Remembering Senator Dianne Feinstein: ‘She Showed the Way’**

Women dominated the stage at a memorial on Thursday for Ms. Feinstein, who broke barriers, over and over.

The memorial for Dianne Feinstein was by turns a celebration of her political efforts, a deeply personal remembrance by her granddaughter, and a testament to her love of all things San Francisco. Credit...Jim Wilson/  
The New York Times

By [Heather Knight](#)

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Almost everyone on the stage outside San Francisco's City Hall on Thursday afternoon was a woman: the vice president, the former speaker of the House, the city's mayor and more.

It was a meaningful, and intentional, reminder of the glass ceilings that Senator Dianne Feinstein had broken again and again as the city's first female mayor and California's first female senator.

"Millions of girls my age and long after me have grown blissfully free of the yokes our grandmothers wore because Dianne Feinstein wrestled them off," Mayor London Breed, 49, told the crowd who had gathered in her city under unusually hot temperatures to honor the late senator. "She showed the way."

The memorial for Ms. Feinstein, who died on Sept. 29 at age 90, was by turns a celebration of her long and unwavering efforts around gun control and opposition to wartime torture, a deeply personal remembrance by her granddaughter, and a testament to her love of all things San Francisco.

The gold-domed City Hall proved an appropriate backdrop. It was where Ms. Feinstein, a Democrat and the Senate's oldest member, once served as the first female president of the board of supervisors, before becoming mayor.

Image

"Our country has come a long way. You helped move the ball forward, and our nation salutes you," said Vice President Kamala Harris, who served with Ms. Feinstein in the Senate. Credit...Amy Osborne/The New York Times

Vice President Kamala Harris, whose presence prompted the blocks all around City Hall to be closed, recalled that when she was sworn in as the junior senator from California in 2017, Ms. Feinstein, the senior senator, pulled her into a private hideaway off the Senate floor and handed her a glass of California chardonnay and a binder full of draft bills.

"Dianne, the women of America have come a long way," Ms. Harris, the first woman to serve as vice president, told the gathered group, which included some 40 current and former members of the Senate and House. "Our country has come a long way. You helped move the ball forward, and our nation salutes you."

As the afternoon wore on, the speakers were repeatedly interrupted by the roar of the Blue Angels — blue and yellow military jets that rattle nerves and windows every October for Fleet Week, an air show and parade of ships celebrating the U.S. Navy, which this year was dedicated to Ms. Feinstein.

more reminder that while Ms. Feinstein had served in the Senate for more than 30 years, her ties to her hometown remained deep.

Her death prompted tributes from the 49ers football team and the Giants baseball team. The day before her memorial, thousands of people [lined up to pay their respects](#) in front of her coffin, draped in an American flag, in the City Hall rotunda.

Her memorial on Thursday was dotted with San Francisco songs. Beforehand, “I Left My Heart in San Francisco” by Tony Bennett played over the loudspeakers. And the service ended with the San Francisco Girls Chorus performing “San Francisco,” with its famous lines, “Open your golden gate, you’ll let nobody wait outside your door.” The former is the city’s official ballad, and the latter its official song.

Many San Franciscans learned only over the past week that they owed many of their city’s trademarks to Ms. Feinstein — including the cable cars, the historic streetcars, and Pier 39, the tourist waterfront spot. Turns out, she started the city’s Fleet Week and the Blue Angels appearances, too — back in 1981.

Ms. Feinstein steered San Francisco through some of its darkest times after the 1978 assassination of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, events that propelled her into the mayor’s seat. She is credited with providing compassion and city dollars during the onset of the AIDS pandemic, which devastated the city’s gay community. She fought to preserve Lake Tahoe and created Joshua Tree National Park.

The tributes came from far beyond California. President Biden, who provided a military plane to fly Ms. Feinstein’s body home from Washington, recorded video remarks that were played at the service, calling his longtime colleague during his years in the Senate “a reminder that our democracy depends on the constitution of our character as people.”

Chuck Schumer, the Senate majority leader and the only man in elected office to speak at Ms. Feinstein’s service, recalled her for her grit. He remembered a day when she had hobbled around on an injured ankle to continue her work, and her no-nonsense response when he asked her how she had persisted: “I just did.”

Among those in attendance were some of the people who are hoping to assume Ms. Feinstein’s place in the Senate: Representatives Adam Schiff and Barbara Lee, both Democrats. Laphonza Butler, [whom Gov. Gavin Newsom has tapped](#) to complete Ms. Feinstein’s current Senate term, also attended. Representative Katie Porter, another Democrat who has entered the race for Senate, did not attend, according to Ms. Feinstein’s office.

Eileen Mariano, Ms. Feinstein’s granddaughter, remembered her grandmother outside of a political sphere — as someone who always backed her up, picked flowers with her and played chess with her.

“To me, she will be remembered as the most incredible grandmother,” said Ms. Mariano, who works as a policy adviser to Ms. Breed.

Ms. Mariano, 31, recalled sleepovers at Ms. Feinstein’s home in the Pacific Heights neighborhood, but also the crucial advice that her grandmother had left her with, pressing the value of hard work and doing something you love.

Her grandmother, she said, had urged her to find her life’s passion, to “earn your spurs” — and always, whatever trip you’re going on, “pack a black pantsuit.”

Emily Cochrane, Shawn Hubler and Colbi Edmonds contributed reporting.

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