

Martin Paley

1930 - 2024



Martin Paley Obituary

Martin Paley

03/08/1930 - 09/12/2024

Martin Paley husband, partner, father and grandfather, championed the role of the "Independent Sector" working with public and private sectors of government and business, successfully collaborating for the health and well-being of the Bay Area.

Martin A. Paley died on September 12, 2024, at the age of 94. He grew up in Los Angeles with his mother, Adele Mohr Paley, his sister, Renee Stevens, and his father, Noah Paley. He served two years in the Army, spending time in Korea and retiring as a Sergeant First Class.

Martin graduated in 1958 from UC Berkeley, with a master's degree in public health (MPH). There he met his wife, Muriel Henry. Together they raised three children: Mark, Daniel, and Anne.

Martin began his professional career in health planning, becoming the executive director of a nine-county organization, assisting a hundred and ten general hospitals to meet community need. He became the president and CEO of an international consulting firm, working across disciplines to create a new medical center in Alaska in the early 1970s. He helped the Alaskan Federation of Natives in their successful effort to negotiate with the Indian Health Service for control over dedicated programs and facilities.

In 1974 he became the executive director of the San Francisco Foundation. His mentorship and innovative funding initiatives influenced many staff members and community fellows who went on to become Bay Area leaders with similar views of community service. Over thirteen years at the Foundation, assets grew from \$50 million to \$600 million with grants of \$30 million per year. Examples include Bridge Housing for middle and low-income families and acquiring land to create the Marconi Retreat Center in Marin County. The funding of a fellowship program to cultivate new leaders in the Bay Area was innovative, with an impact still felt today.

Martin was willing to challenge existing principles of private philanthropy that he felt did not support the common good. When the Foundation sought to modify the terms of the large general-purpose Buck Trust, dedicated to serve only wealthy Marin County, a legal contest ensued resulting in a court confirmed settlement to create a separate foundation to serve only Marin County, rejecting a proposal which Martin and others hoped would allow the Buck Trust to benefit a far wider area.

Martin continued to serve the Bay Area through consulting and as a member of boards in the not-for-profit field. He managed a 30-million-dollar campaign for the San Francisco Main Library, creating a series of groups representing distinct sectors of the community, which included, African American, Latino, Gay/Lesbian, Asian and environmental activists. This approach demonstrated his inclusion of groups who had been previously ignored on major civic projects, and translated to the way money was raised and the purposes for which it was spent, influencing fund drives nationwide.

Other organizations he consulted with included The Bernard Osher Foundation, KQED, Kaiser Permanente, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, the Alameda County Medical Center, the California Association of Counties, Dominican University of California, and the Alameda County Department of Behavioral Care Services. Illustrative of his focus on helping organizations live their values, Alameda County created "Values Based Budgeting." The impact of this 2-year project is seen today as the County is still guided by a set of explicit values and priorities.

Martin served on several community boards and national committees, helping to strengthen the "Third Sector" in the Bay Area and beyond. As a charter member and treasurer of John Gardener's "The Independent Sector," and part of the Fifth Disciple author Peter Senge's "Systems Thinking Working Group," Martin brought the latest knowledge to each of his board commitments. Organizations where he served include: the Council on Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council on Education for Public Health, Bay Area Vision 2020, the Graduate Theological Union, the World Institute on Disability, the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, the Berkeley Community Fund, the University of California Press Foundation, the Kala Art Institute, the University of California School of Public Health Deans Advisory Council, and Ashby Village.

Martin illustrated his robust approach to life through his family, friends, and his love of adventures. Outings often had the wide outdoors as their focus. Some of the more memorable trips include a car camping trip across the country, a 3-day hike along the northern coast of

California, multiple backpacking trips in the Sierra after weeks of preparing, with some convincing of his wife Muriel, scuba diving with his sons, and a remote rafting trip through the wilderness in Alaska. He would also strike out on his own, such as when he decided to see the Hetch Hetchy Dam firsthand. He shared his passion for the arts with his wife of 55 years, a talented visual artist who passed away from breast cancer in 2013.

Joan Cole, a committed community activist and retired psychotherapist, has enriched Martin's life over the last nine years as his caring partner. Martin and Joan shared their lives and their families. They were able to combine their vast networks of civic minded people in the spirit of the common good to continue making contributions to the health and wellbeing of the Bay Area. Martin is survived by his partner, Joan Cole. He is also survived by his son, Mark Paley, a foundation administrator and his wife, Rachel; his son Daniel Paley, an engineer, and his wife Jodi; his daughter, Anne Paley, a behavioral analyst and her husband Ian; his grandchildren, Davin, Risa, Dylan and Ryan, and Reene and her husband James.

Martin died at home as he lived, endeavoring to have his actions match his values in a Hospice program, which he helped introduce to the Bay Area in 1978. Through Martin A. Paley's mentoring and a life lived with common good values, his family and the Bay Area will continue to experience gains from his inspirational leadership.

To honor Martin's life please send contributions to the Martin Paley Fund for an inclusive Village to Ashby Village, 1821 Catalina Ave. Berkeley, CA. 94707.

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