



A Extraordinary Woman

Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud is gathering information to create a comprehensive history of Myrtelle L. Gunsul, the first woman elected in Long Beach and the longest-serving elected official in the City's history. Her office prepared this story for THE VOTER in honor of Women's History Month.

Myrtelle Gunsul was elected City Auditor *eleven* times and she always won her races in the primary. At each election she received more votes than any candidate for any office on the ballot. She retired in 1951 after 32 years of service.

All of that would be considered extraordinary by today's standards -- for a woman or a man. But Myrtelle Gunsul was first elected in 1919! Most women in the United States couldn't even vote yet. Women in California had won full voting rights in 1911 but the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution wasn't ratified until 1920.

Next to the photo of Gunsul in Doud's office hangs a letter that Gunsul wrote in 1931 for the Municipal Auditorium time capsule. Unearthed in 1975, her letter is addressed to the women of the future, hoping that her example will inspire other women to enter into public service. The letter includes her motto, "efficiency, not politics."

Gunsul was age 47 when she was elected, retired at 78, and died in 1958 at age 89.

Until recently, the story of this remarkable woman seemed lost to history. Research continues so her story will live as an inspiration for future generations.

Anyone with information on Gunsul, memories of her service, or artifacts from her administration is asked to call the City Auditor's office at 562/ 570-6434. □