



# SHIRLEY OTTO



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## *2018 SANTA BARBARA COURT OF CHAMPIONS INDUCTEE*

Shirley Zion Otto was born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana where her greatest memories and joy as a teenager was watching the Fort Wayne Pistons practice and play at her high school. She would spend her lunch time watching the Pistons practice and as an avid fan, view their games in the evenings.

In 1948, she and her brother moved to San Luis Obispo with intentions of attending Cal Poly University. Instead, a bookkeeping career ensued until she met and married her husband Richard Otto. The couple moved to Montecito in 1964, just days prior to the devastating coyote fire. The flames and embers touched all around their 11-acre estate but was spared. Unfortunately, many of her neighbor's homes were destroyed.

Along with golf and learning to fly 4 seated airplanes, Shirley was a great lover of the Los Angeles Lakers. She witnessed the days of Jerry West, Elgin Baylor and Wilt Chamberlain but her interests escalated into the clouds when Ervin "Magic" Johnson entered the Lakers scene. Throw in the arch rival east coast "villain" Boston Celtics and Shirley was completely hooked on hoops. She preceded to purchase a satellite dish so that she could watch east coast games at 4 pm, preparing for the Laker games on the west coast.

While she was listening to a Laker game announcer Chick Hearn mentioned that CBA franchises were available for purchase and the number to call. She made that call and also contacted Laker legend and Santa Barbara resident Bill Bertka and it was "game on". In May of 1989, Shirley purchased a CBA franchise, later named the Santa Barbara Islanders. The Islanders were an affiliate for both the Lakers and Los Angeles Clippers and set many records in its first and only year of existence. Not only did the team record the most wins by an expansion first year team (37) but archives validate the 123.7 points per game offense as the most potent ever in the 70-year-old league. The team also holds records for most offensive points total in a season and 10 players being sent up to NBA teams during the 1989-90 season.

Fast forward through her years living in Santa Barbara (over 54 years), Shirley has given abundant financial support to local basketball endeavors at all levels; youth, high school, college and professionally. She has also contributed significantly to animal shelters and local non-profit organizations for music and education, all for the youth in our community.

At age 91, Shirley is confined to her home, due to limited strength to walk. She bides her time watching Lakers basketball with her great dane, Cleo and 4 cats and adds that she misses seeing Magic and Larry Bird battle on the floor. From Fort Wayne to Santa Barbara, she has lived a very fulfilling life.



*1989-90 Santa Barbara Islanders CBA team  
owned by Shirley Zion Otto*