

**Retired Assessor
Historical Questionnaire
HONORABLE VIRGINIA LOFTUS**

Prepared by Cris Andrews

1. **Describe career before becoming Assessor:** Virginia Loftus was a realtor and housewife before running for Assessor. She had management experience working at AT&T. She was politically active in local government elections as well as State wide Republican contests.
2. **Give milestones of Assessor Career, year elected, reelected, and date of retirement:** Virginia Loftus was elected in 1978 in a hard fought campaign where she came in second in the Primary and prevailed in the General over a seasoned employee of the Assessor's Office. She was re-elected 3 more times without opposition. Virginia held office from January 8, 1979 to her retirement on August 19, 1994. She came into office with the advent of Prop 13 so that she faced many challenges in not only learning what an Assessor does but also how to administer a new program. Virginia was very active in the CAA and the NCAA and in 1988 she was elected President of the California Assessors' Association. She was proud of the fact that she was the first woman president in the Association's history and only the second Shasta County Assessor to be elected to that position. In July of 1990 the Board of Supervisors combined the Assessor's Office and the Recorder's Office into one office headed by Mrs. Loftus.
3. **Describe career after retirement:** Virginia retired for health reasons in August 1994, before the end of her fourth term. Unfortunately she experienced little quality time in retirement; she passed away on February 21, 1997 after a long and painful battle with cancer.
4. **What was her relationship with her predecessor:** Not particularly good. Virginia sought the position of Assessor because she felt that the office was not being run properly. She believed the Assessor should be accessible and accountable. There was no transition period for her and no help from her predecessor.
5. **What was her relationship with her successor:** I am proud to say that it was very good. Virginia encouraged me to run for office and she supported me. Even though she was deathly ill, she fought hard to see me prevail in the primary election in a field of four candidates. With her support, I managed to win by 55%, thus avoiding a November run-off. Without her support I am convinced that we would have gone to a run-off. She was enormously popular and she used every resource she had to see that I had the best opportunity to succeed. We were very close and I was privileged to have known her. I owe much of my success to her and to the lessons she taught me about what it means to be an elected official.
6. **Why did she run for Assessor:** Virginia and several of her neighbors filed an assessment appeal contending that their residences were overvalued. She represented the group and won her appeal. The incumbent Assessor chose not to seek re-election and Virginia believed that she could make a difference in the way property owners were treated while ensuring that assessable property was properly valued.
7. **What did she consider her greatest accomplishments:** Mrs. Loftus was instrumental in bringing about the change from the County Board of Supervisors

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sitting as the Assessment Appeals Board, to an independent Appeals Board. She also was proud of her efforts in seeing that Assessors were made constitutional officers. In her capacity as President of the CAA she co-authored the State Ballot Argument in favor of Proposition 66 that was overwhelmingly favored by the voters.

8. **What did she wish she could have done differently:** I think she would say that she would have liked to have had a better relationship with some members of the Board of Supervisors and the CAO in the early years of her tenure. I am sure she would have wanted fewer budget battles.
9. **What would she have remembered most fondly about her time in office:** Virginia was fond of her staff and often credited her success to the hard-working and dedicated employees in the Assessor-Recorder's Office. She also had many good friendships with her fellow Assessors and she would have remembered many of the conferences and the good times spent with her colleagues.
10. **Were there any parts of her career that she wished had not happened:** I am sure Virginia regretted the strained relations with some of the Board members and some of the CAOs.
11. **What was her relationship with the CAA:** Virginia served as CAA President in 1988. She held all the officer positions and was Standards Chair as well. She was President of the NCAA. She hosted an Annual State Conference in Redding and several regional conferences. She was well respected by her colleagues because she was competent, tough, and had a great sense of humor.
12. **Recollection of "Assessor Scandals" of the 1960's:** Virginia wasn't involved at that time with the assessment community, but I know that she was aware of the past problems. She had a very strong policy regarding potential conflicts of interests. She required staff to notify her if they were going to buy real estate in Shasta County and she demanded that they disclose the fact that they were an employee of the Assessor's Office to the seller.
13. **Describe the pressure and stress of the Assessor's job prior to passage of Prop 13 & did she actively oppose or support Prop 13:** Virginia was sworn into office as Proposition 13 was going into effect. She supported the measure, as she believed that it finally gave property owners the ability to budget for their taxes. She believed taxes ought to be predictable.
14. **Was she involved in State or County politics, other than the Assessor's Office & did run for other offices while Assessor:** Virginia believed strongly that the Assessor should be an elected office and be able to answer directly to their constituents. When Proposition 66 was placed on the ballot in 1988 to make the Assessor a constitutional officer, Virginia was one of the supporters in the ballot arguments. Virginia was very active in local races and was active in the Republican Party. She held many political fund raisers at her house and was well known for her political acumen. She and her husband Collin helped paint signs for many of the local candidates and they prepared all of my signs for my campaign. Their expertise in sign preparation was renown and highly sought after by local candidates. Virginia was definitely considered by the people of Shasta County to be a prominent political person. Her support was high on

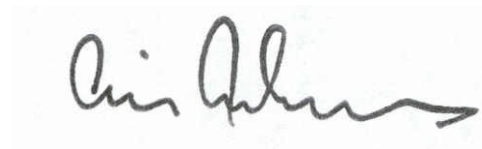
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everyone's list of endorsements. It is hard to remember a time when she wasn't involved in State and local politics.

15. **What kind of person would it take to make a good Assessor:** First and foremost she would have said that the person must be accountable and accessible to all citizens and taxpayers. She would say that a person who is politically independent, free of conflicts of interest and committed to prompt, professional, and courteous customer service is the kind of person to occupy the position of Assessor. Having an appraisal and/or real estate background as well as management experience would be an important quality, but she would have said that it is not as essential as having the right ethics. She would also have said that you have to be tough, fair, and unambiguous in all your dealings with employees. She believed she could only be successful as Assessor if her staff was successful. I also think she would believe that a good Assessor has to be a good listener with a fair amount of intuitive curiosity. I remember vividly a mobile home (it was called that then) owner came in to see her because we had sent him an escaped assessment for his mobile home. He claimed he had always paid his taxes on the mobile home and it just couldn't have escaped assessment. The area appraiser, Supervising Appraiser, Chief Appraiser, and I all reviewed the record and concluded he was mistaken and that our escape assessment was proper. We were so certain we even had him convinced, but Virginia wasn't so sure. To our consternation she insisted on reviewing the parcel map and the records for the parcels owned by this mobile home owner. She soon discovered, to our embarrassment, that the so-called escaped mobile home was, and always had been, assessed to this owner on a parcel across the street that he owned. We simply had it on the wrong parcel! She took the time to listen and to look into all the facts before rendering a decision. I'll never forget this very important lesson and I'll never forget the very Honorable Virginia Loftus, my predecessor, mentor, and friend.

Prepared and submitted by Shasta County Assessor-Recorder, Cris Andrews



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