

IN MEMORIAM | Linda Mook

"Protect the contract and it will protect you"

Last year, CFT staffer Linda Mook logged thousands of miles traveling the state to help K-12 teachers and paraprofessionals

journalism teacher of 27 years and an ardent unionist who changed the lives of the 1,200 teachers working in Orange County's Newport-Mesa Uni-



SHARON BEALS

Linda Mook, center, in a salute to solidarity, at the CFT Convention in 2001.

understand the arcane and nonsensical requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. She followed and interpreted every development at the State Board of Education and those of federal bureaucrats crafting the regulations; she unraveled the jargon and turned it into understandable Powerpoint presentations and a series of no-nonsense articles in *California Teacher*.

Her enormous effort, it turned out, came at the end of her life—a life packed with accomplishment as a beloved

fied School District.

Mook, 62, died Dec. 30 of colon cancer diagnosed just six months earlier.

In addition to her duties as local union president, Mook contributed much of her energy to CFT as a dedicated vice president. But in 2003, even Newport-Mesa district administrators were saddened when she announced that, after seven years at the helm of the Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers, Local 4794, she would join CFT as an educational issues coordinator.

At a memorial service held Jan. 19 at Corona del Mar High School, her colleagues called her a "trusted leader," "unfailingly positive," and "a bundle of energy with a face full of smile..." They credited her for nurturing a constructive relationship between the union and the district, and defined time in the district as "before Linda Mook and after Linda Mook."

Union colleague Jo Ann Copp marveled at Mook's dedication and wondered when she slept. She recalled hours of planning workshops for CFT Conventions, and hours of work negotiating in the district. During it all, Mook would say, "Protect the contract and it will protect you."

Bill Leach, another teacher in the district, concluded, "Every teacher who has taught in the district over the last few years should thank Linda for her effort in improving our salaries, our working conditions and our standing in the community. Most teachers who have been hired in the last few years probably don't know of her, but they have benefited the most from her efforts."

► *Donations to the Linda Mook Memorial Scholarship Fund can be sent to the Newport-Mesa Federation of Teachers at 2900 Bristol St., Suite C107, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.*