

## For Ginger Gherardi, Access through WTS Proves Powerful

PRESIDENTS 30TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES



*Ginger Gherardi (Ventura County Transportation Commissioner and WTS-LA president from 1986-1988),  
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For Ventura County Transportation Commissioner Ginger Gherardi, being WTS-LA president from 1986-1988 provided a perfect stage for professional advancement.

“The great advantage of being chapter president was the opportunity to meet people and develop contacts on a personal level throughout Los Angeles, the Los Angeles region, and later on a national level, when I was WTS National president. That was an enormous personal and professional opportunity and it gave me a broad appreciation for the reach of WTS.”

Gherardi led Ventura County Transportation Commission as Executive Director for nearly 20 years, and was responsible for transportation planning and implementation in Ventura County. Her mandate included highways, roads, public transit, paratransit, rail service (Metrolink), airport land-use, callboxes, and new technology. After retiring from VCTC, Gherardi was elected to the Santa Paula City Council and now represents the City as a Commissioner on the Ventura County Transportation Commission.

Her tenure as VCTC executive director was a challenging job, but she believes WTS-LA helped prepare her well.

“There were times professionally when I needed assistance with some particular projects. WTS provided near-immediate access to people throughout the country who were in policymaking positions, people who had the ability to help you. That access cannot be understated. But it wasn’t just access through people you knew. You could gain access to people whether you knew them or not. People would respond to you based on the fact that you were a member of WTS alone. And that was very helpful.”



But the organization did not always have that kind of extensive reach. Gherardi remembers its nascent beginnings.

“When I started with WTS-LA, we had only maybe 15 or 20 women in the chapter. I’m not even sure there were any men. And we got together in a conference room at what was then called the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC). Someone brought a bottle of wine and other people came with cheese and we all sat down and cut up the cheese and drank the wine. Then we had a meeting.”

Her WTS-LA presidency had an equally innocuous beginning.



“I was manager of highway programs for LACTC and I was in a cast from knee surgery due to a skiing accident when I was approached to become president. Three or four people on LACTC ganged up on me to get me to take over. It was hard for me to talk my way out of it. It was also hard for me to literally ‘escape,’ as I could barely get around at the time. So I finally agreed. And I guess the rest is history. But if I had said no, I would never have been on the national board and would never have made the contacts that proved invaluable throughout my career.” (Gherardi is shown above talking with USDOT Secretary Mary Peters at a 2007 WTS Los Angeles event.)

Gherardi also used her time as president well.

“During that time, the Los Angeles chapter grew from a casual group at the outset to a professional organization of very high caliber. The thing that always amazed me was that WTS-LA always attracted really high quality people. The chapter has grown into a highly professional organization that is a real asset for people. That transition took place during the time I was WTS-LA president. Then I became WTS National president, which provided professional growth in a much larger arena. Serving first as WTS-LA president and then as WTS National president played a very important role in my career by providing access and the ability to develop contacts on a national scale.”