

## Terminally ill woman graduates SDSU

*Phyllis Brooks receives her Bachelor of Arts degree in political science at the age of 68 in front of friends and family*

**BY BRANDON JENKINS**  
CITY EDITOR

Sixty-eight-year-old Phyllis Brooks has terminal cancer — but that hasn't stopped her from earning her college diploma.

Last Friday, President Stephen Weber conferred Brooks' Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in front of friends and family at the Lipinsky Hospitality Center. Brooks was also presented with several resolutions from Congressman Bob Filner, Disabled Student Services, Educational Opportunity Program and Associated Students.

Filner's proclamation read "I, Bob Filner, congressman of California's 51st congressional district, do hereby proclaim Feb. 20, 2004 as 'Phyllis Ann Brooks Day' in the 51st congressional district and encourage all citizens therein to recognize and celebrate her contributions to her community."

Other resolutions Brooks received commended her for her accomplishments in school and in the community, and congratulated her for completing her degree.

After years of battling can-

cer, Brooks finished her degree in December. She said she wanted to eventually earn her master's degree and become a professor in political science, women's studies or gerontology.

"I've been doing work in political science," Brooks said. "It was the only way to get heard and to be an activist and really get out there to do what was necessary, because a lot of things weren't getting done that should've been getting done."

Brooks went back to school when she was 60 years old and graduated from Southwestern College in 1999. She then went on to San Diego State. Two weeks before she entered SDSU, she was diagnosed with cancer.

"It wasn't easy going to school being sick and taking chemotherapy and radiation treatments and all that," she said.

Joan Miller, Brooks' anthropology professor, said Brooks was a good student who always sat in front and was very vocal.

"All the students loved her," Miller said. "They became very attached to her."

Miller said the first time Brooks tried to take the course, she was too sick so she had to take an incomplete. When she took the course over, she sat in class through about one-half of

the semester and had to do the remaining coursework at home. Miller said she ended up getting a very good grade in the class.

"All of the students were rooting for her," she said.

Miller said Brooks told her she wanted her diploma before she died.

"I really admire her," Miller said. "She did something most people would think is impossible."

Director of Disabled Student Services Mary Shojai, who also did the welcome on Friday, said the event was a beautiful celebration of Brooks' accomplishments.

"Phyllis has taught us probably as much as she has learned," Shojai said.

Brooks said she would like to thank SDSU for her years as a student and for presenting the degree to her. She said she wasn't a "piece of cake" and it wasn't a piece of cake for her to make it through school.

"If you want something bad enough, you would be willing to give up whatever it is to go for it and be willing to work for it," Brooks said, "and with education there is learning, with learning there is understanding and understanding is the onset to the road of peace."



University President Stephen Weber (left) and Congressman Bob Filner stand by Phyllis Brooks in the Lipinsky Hospitality Center. Courtesy photo