

lantos and religion

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Subject: lantos and religion

FYI . . . Dan Baer filled me in on this:

While Lantos proudly wore his Jewish identity in public life, his private life was a more complicated matter. Lantos married his childhood sweetheart and fellow Holocaust survivor, Annette Tillemann, who was a Jew by birth but a Mormon by choice. Their two daughters were both raised in the Mormon faith.

Lantos's wife worked side by side with him on Jewish causes, but the congressman's private engagement with Mormonism made many in the Jewish community uncomfortable, and Lantos generally declined to talk about his own private religious practice. When Lantos first came to office, Jewish institutional leaders did not quite know how to deal with him and his wife, most especially when Annette Lantos referred to the Jewish people with the possessive "we."

Still, Lantos left no question that in public he was a Jew. In his official biography, Lantos listed his religion as Jewish. His death this week was met by a profuse outpouring of praise from Jewish organizations and politicians spanning the partisan spectrum.