

# Met Council member, ex-legislator Carolyn Rodriguez dies of cancer

By David Peterson **STAR TRIBUNE MAR 8 '02**  
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Carolyn Rodriguez felt something in her back, but she thought it was arthritis. In mid-January she went in for tests, and the following day received the news: It wasn't arthritis. It was bone cancer.

A week ago, following a third stay in the hospital, the Metropolitan Council member and former DFL legislator came home to die.

"She wanted to be home," said her friend Carolyn Ayres, "and she wanted no negativity. People came into the house to say goodbye, and it was just beautiful. She was beautifully spoken with everyone, and there was a smile on her face."

Rodriguez, 58, of Apple Valley, died Thursday.

"The two words I would use to describe her are 'gentle woman,'" said Ann Wynia, the former majority leader of the Minnesota House, who knew her in the Legislature and became a



**Carolyn Rodriguez joined the Metropolitan Council in 1999.**

friend. "She ousted an incumbent in her first race, but she did it with gentle truthfulness. She was a very principled person. She knew what was important. She stood for principle, but always in a gentle way.

"When she applied for the Met Council position, she sent Gov. [Jesse] Ventura a letter saying, 'Here's where I agree with you and here's where I disagree.' I can't believe many applicants do the latter. She was the kind of person who gives politics a good name."

Rodriguez was a military brat who traveled the world throughout her childhood and met her husband, Jesus, in his native Spain. She was elected to the Legislature just a few years after arriving in Minnesota and served in the House from 1981 to '85.

During that period she was chairwoman of the state Commission on the Economic Status of Women and later led the state's Ethical Practices Board, overseeing campaign finance. Feminism played a big role in her life, as did helping the underprivileged, friends said.

She regularly held bipartisan potluck dinners, where women judges, college presidents and others could meet women whom they otherwise wouldn't know. "It was a wonderful

mix," Wynia said.

Rodriguez also was known as a transit advocate, and Ventura named her to a transit-minded council in 1999. Met Council Chairman Ted Mondale described her death as "a terrible loss to her family, her community, the council and the region."

Chuck Slocum, a former state Republican Party chairman, got to know her on the Ethical Practices Board and became a friend.

"She was a very soft, listening, gentle person at one level, but a very strong-willed, determined woman," he said. "She was Minnesota's 'steel magnolia' — a lot of deep strength. She dealt with death very bravely. She said, 'I'm not afraid of death. I'm ready to say my goodbyes.'"

In addition to her husband, she is survived by her son, Andres, of Edina; her father, George Deshon, of California, and her stepmother, Viva; a twin brother, George, of Hawaii, and a sister, Susan, of Oregon.

A memorial service is scheduled for 3 p.m. March 15 at Weyerhaeuser Chapel, Macalester College, 1600 Grand Av., St. Paul.

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