



Trinidad Martinez Rodriguez

June 16, 1946 - February 11, 2019

Trinidad Rodriguez — former mayor of Kerman, community leader and Vietnam veteran — will long be remembered as a selfless man with an unrelenting drive to give back, friends and family said.

Rodriguez died of natural causes at his home early Monday. He was 72.

The son of migrant farmworkers, Rodriguez will be remembered by many in his hometown of Kerman and throughout Fresno County, where he was deeply involved in local government.

Longtime Kerman city manager Ron Manfredi said Rodriguez was one of the most effective local leaders he has ever worked with. Rodriguez is credited with helping to revitalize Kerman by improving roadways and elevating the community's standing among Valley cities. He served as mayor for 14 years.

Along with being mayor and a longtime council member, Rodriguez was a member of the Fresno Local Agency Formation Commission, Fresno County Rural Transit Agency, past chairman of the United Way of Fresno County, and the Council of Governments, where he served as chairman.

“He was one of the best, if not the best, elected officials,” said Manfredi, Kerman's city manager for 19 years. “And Kerman shows it.”

As a young man, Rodriguez wanted a career in the medical field, but those plans took a detour after he was drafted into the Army in 1966. He was shipped to Vietnam where he served as a field medic. The experience took a toll on him, physically and emotionally, said his daughter Myra Squeo.

After returning home, he got a job as a mechanic, working on buses for Kerman Unified School District. It wasn't long before he was promoted to bus driver. Squeo remembers that her father was always careful about making sure the students he was dropping off

made it safely to their homes.

“He wouldn’t drive away until he saw them go inside their house,” she said. “

He worked for the district for 32 years, eventually rising through the ranks to become head of the district’s transportation and maintenance department.

It was during his years working for the school district that her father became connected to many students who sought his advice and guidance.

“He was always very encouraging to the young people in the community,” she said.

“Everyone was welcome at our house. “

One of those young people was Jass Rai, a former Kerman High student who is now a freshman at the University of California, Berkeley. Rai became a family friend and would visit Rodriguez often.

“He was like grandpa to Jass,” Squeo said. “He really looked up to him. They would have the best conversations about politics and education.”

Rai revered Rodriguez from the first time they met.

“As a little kid in elementary school he would bring his granddaughter to school and I would always admire how much people respected him, how he dressed, how he carried himself,” Rai said. “I cherished him so much. We would talk for hours a week. His vision of lifting others will always be an inspiration to this community.”

Rai’s wants to study law and eventually get involved in public service, just like his role model.

“He was one of the best public servants in the Valley,” Rai said.

Squeo said her father’s poor health caused him to recede from the public eye over the last two years. She said his exposure to the herbicide, Agent Orange, during the war contributed to his decline in health. His nervous system deteriorated, causing him to lose the ability to walk.

Still, Rodriguez wanted to know what was going on in the community. He would ask about how things were going at the school district, or whether the football team won its last

game.

“He was very proud of his community till the very end,” she said.

Rodriguez is survived by his wife Cecelia Rodriguez and his daughters, Myra Squeo and Danelle Provencio.

The family has chosen to not have a public service at this time.

Cemetery Details

Fresno Memorial Gardens

175 S. Cornelia Avenue
Fresno, CA 93706

Tribute Wall



“ *Trinidad Martinez Rodriguez*

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