



ACOSTA

A vigil will be held for Sister Margarita Acosta at 7 tonight in the chapel of Providence Mount St. Vincent in Seattle. The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 2 p.m. Sunday at the chapel of the Lutheran Bible Institute, Providence Heights in Issaquah. Interment will be at 9 a.m. Monday at Calvary Cemetery in Seattle.

BIOGRAPHY ACOSTA, SISTER MARGARITA

We just sang her into heaven

Sister Margarita Acosta, former St. E's administrator, dies of leukemia

YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

Local History

MAR 18 1995

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Of the Herald-Republic

She was a lover and a laughter. She was a lover of the poor, the disadvantaged, the downtrodden. A lover of life, poetry and fine food. Most of all, she was a lover of God.

Her laughter would well up from her toes, friends say, and envelop her whole 5-foot body until it shook.

But that love and laughter will no longer be a part of this community.

Sister Margarita Acosta, former administrator of St. Elizabeth Medical Center near Providence Yakima Medical Center died Thursday of leukemia and complications

resulting from a bone-marrow transplant at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle. She was 53.

She is survived by her parents, Francis and Miguel Acosta of Sylmar, Calif.; two brothers, Mike Acosta Jr. of Sacramento, Calif., and Danny Acosta of Sylmar; and a sister, Rachel Scholz of Chesterford, Md.

Friends and co-workers remember a woman of great intelligence, zeal for life and love.

"As a hospital administrator, she was very bright," said John Colgan, executive director of the Providence Health Foundation.

Acosta became administrator in 1991 and

resigned in 1994 due to her leukemia.

During her tenure, the medical center opened a skilled nursing unit and the Family Maternity Center, planned for expansion of the regional rehabilitation program, and overcame the shift from an inpatient focus to outpatient services.

She helped look for solutions to the local primary-care physician shortage by refloating the hospital's local Family Practice Residency Program, designed to educate and recruit physicians to the area.

She helped prepare the hospital to implement managed care, and was there when the hospital became the first in the Northwest to use a sophisticated computerized medical record and information-

systems technology.

"In these volatile times of health-care reform, she led with vision and a keen sense of practicality," Colgan said.

Born in El Paso, Texas, Acosta entered the religious community in 1939, and was a Sister of Providence for 34 years. She taught in Catholic schools in Washington and California for 12 years. She received a bachelor's degree in 1964 from Seattle University, and a master's in public health from Yale in 1982. She held several positions at then-Providence Medical Center in Portland, Ore. and as assistant administrator at St. Peter Hospital in Olympia.

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Acosta/ 'Nothing was boring to her'

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As much as friends praise Acosta's intelligence, it was her sense of purpose, compassion and love of life that they speak of.

"She trusted God, and she knew who she was," said Bishop Francis George of the Diocese of Yakima. "She was comfortable about herself and her place in the community. That's why she could do all those things. She wasn't eaten up a lot by things that others expend their energy on."

She loved to cook, friends remember — Mexican food, Indian food, any food.

"If friends were visiting, she would look up foods from where they were from — she wasn't afraid to try anything," said Sister Patricia Glen, director of pastoral care at Providence, who was with Acosta when she died.

And "she'd herd us all off spontaneously for trips — to Leavenworth, Mount Rainier. She'd re-

search where she was going to. Nothing was boring to her," she said.

Even when Acosta found out she had leukemia, and when she had to have a bone-marrow transplant last December, she seemed at peace.

"She planted 200 white tulips at our (Sisters of Providence) house last fall," Glen remembered. "It took her three days to plant them. She told us she had planted them because if she wasn't here in the spring, we would remember her when we saw them."

Toward the end, when Acosta could no longer go out to do the things she loved, her friends and family brought her loves in to her.

Acosta loved to write poetry, Glen said, scribbling about anything from the color greens to having a bone-marrow transplant. During one of her recuperation periods, friends at Providence collected poems to hold a bad po-

etry-reading contest for her.

During her last week, when she was in a coma, friends and family kept vigil around the clock. Friends brought food to the hospital to be shared: barbecued chicken, punch in a glass bowl, eight happiness, potato salad.

"It was appropriate," Glen said, "because she was always gathering family and friends together and cooking for them."

Acosta never came out of her coma, but seemed to know everyone was there, Glen said.

"Her father was there holding her hand, and she wrapped her hand around his," she said. "We sang her songs she loved. The hospital nurses told us to keep the door open so they could hear the singing."

And at the very end, "she just went deeper into a sleep and just stopped her breathing," Glen said. "We sang hymn to Divine Providence" as she took her last breath. We just sang her last breath."

Originally published by the
Yakima Herald-Republic on
March 18, 1995.