

'He died young, but he lived life to the fullest'

Friends, family say goodbye to O'Rourke

By Laura Cruz
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Friends and loved ones said goodbye Friday to a vibrant El Paso businessman and politician who loved and lived life with passion.

More than 600 people attended the funeral Mass for Patrick "Pat" Francis O'Rourke at 1 p.m. Friday at St. Patrick Cathedral.

O'Rourke, 58, was killed Tuesday when he was struck from behind by a car while riding his recumbent bicycle near Artcraft Road and Westside Drive.

"He died young, but he lived life to the fullest," said O'Rourke's son, Robert "Be-to" O'Rourke during his eulogy. "He found a real joy in living."

O'Rourke was a county commissioner from 1978-82 and was county judge from 1982-86. His last attempt at politics was in 1998, when he ran as the Republican candidate for county judge and lost to current County Judge Dolores Briones.

Despite switching parties from Democrat to Republican in the late 1980s, a move that can ruin some politicians, O'Rourke was respected by people in both parties.

"He was always very nice to me," said Enriqueta "Queta" Fierro, El Paso Democratic Party chairwoman, who met O'Rourke in the late 1970s. "He was his own man with a strong character. He was a doer, with good ideas. Not everything worked, but all in all he loved El Paso, and that's what made him strong."

O'Rourke's friends U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas, and Texas Sen. Eliot



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Melissa O'Rourke, center in black, was escorted out of St. Patrick Cathedral on Friday after the funeral Mass for her husband, ex-County Judge Pat O'Rourke. Their daughter Charlotte O'Rourke is at

top left. Businessman Jack Maxon, lower left, served as a pallbearer and spoke during the service, telling friends and family about the good memories he has of O'Rourke when they bicycled together.