

Natalia Delgado, longtime District 7 employee

Natalia Delgado, a longtime Caltrans employee and prominent community activist, died Feb. 5. She was 62.

Delgado is perhaps best known at Caltrans for helping establish the District 7 Women's Advisory Committee, which became a model for the statewide program.

During her 25-year career at Caltrans, Delgado helped many fellow employees better themselves, giving freely of her knowledge and experience.

"She was very interested in helping everybody," said Irene Gutierrez-Garza, affirmative action officer for District 12, who worked with Delgado in District 7.

Among her many initiatives, Delgado is credited with inspiring a training program to help clerical workers qualify for administrative positions.

Delgado rose to prominence in the Los Angeles area for her volunteer work in Hispanic and women's issues, including working as a volunteer crisis intervention counselor.

"She was quite involved in the community," said Mario Caraveo of the District 7 Civil Rights Division.

Even though she retired from Caltrans in March, of 1988, Delgado had many friends in District 7 who were saddened by her death.

Some of the words they used to describe her included "community leader," "counselor," "mentor" and "friend." She was also known for her vivacious, magnetic personality that helped open many doors of opportunity for others.

Before joining Caltrans in 1963, Delgado worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Board of

Equalization and the Department of Industrial Safety.

Her first position with Caltrans came in 1964 when she was hired as a stenographer to work in the General Services Department, which is now called Business Services. She also worked for Programs and Budgets, Systems and Procedures, the Office of Engineering, Employee Relations and Personnel. Her co-workers said Caltrans benefited from her intelligence and creativity.

Among the groups Delgado participated in were Children of War, CAFE de Los Angeles and CAFE de California.

Delgado had four children: Antonio Villaraigosa, Mary Lou Villar, Debra Villar and Rob Delgado.

Friends noted that Delgado raised her four children largely by herself, and all four grew up to be "over achievers." Antonio Villaraigosa earned

a law degree and now represents the United Teachers Union of Los Angeles, while Mary Lou Villar, another law school graduate, is an administrative law judge. Debra Villar is currently working on her master's degree in education at California State University, Los Angeles, and Rob Delgado, a graduate of the University of Southern California, is a commodities broker.

The family in 1987 was first runner-up for Hispanic Family of the Year, an award sponsored by a local beverage company, and was the only single-parent family so honored.

"Natalia was a role model for a lot of people," said Rosaline Velasco, another Delgado admirer who works in the District 7 Civil Rights branch.

"When she walked into a room, she really lighted it up. She exemplified what a woman can do on her own."

Delgado's funeral was held Feb. 9 at All Souls Catholic Church in Alhambra, and several prominent politicians and community leaders were in attendance. They included Congressman Edward R. Roybal, Assemblywoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, Assemblyman Xavier Becerra, Supervisor Gloria Molina, Marshall Diaz, president of CAFE de California, and Antonio Rodriguez, former director of the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice. Many Caltrans employees attended the services, including District 11 Director Jesus Garcia. □



Next month in:

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Adopt-A-Wall

District 7 Director Jerry B. Baxter kicked off the district's Adopt-A-Wall program by giving the first graffiti-removal permit to Father Tom Loftus, who runs a counseling program for troubled youth in the West San Gabriel Valley.

HAC Joins with Junior Achievement

The District 7 Hispanic Advisory Committee joined forces with the Junior Achievement Program to educate students in the field of transportation.

Speedy

He doesn't talk much, but he certainly works hard. "Speedy," the robot that delivers the mail in the Spring Street building, remains a head-turner.