

TRIBUTE

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Rick Garris' Life

My brother Ricardo ("Big Rick") Garris was born June 27, 1955, to Willie F. Garris of Charlotte, N.C., and the late Helen W. Garris of St. Augustine Fla.

As a child, Rick loved to play jokes on his unsuspecting friends, especially me, his sister Karen, who was often the butt of his jokes. For example, he told me I had won a contest, called a taxi to take me to CBS Studios and told me to call him when I arrived. Boy did I feel stupid when I arrived at the studios and no one knew who I was! Of course when I called him he laughed so hard I had to start laughing.

He would mail invitations to my friends to attend a party that no one in the family knew about, sent my picture to men in prison (I was quite popular with the inmates), signed me up for numerous clubs or events without my consent (including the bird watchers, Special Olympics, 20-mile hikes), and he used my name to pledge millions of dollars to charities. One charity was so impressed with my pledge they sent a TV crew to our house to interview me! Of course Rick laughed and ran out of the house, leaving my parents to smooth things out.

Rick attended Morningside High School, where he was an outstanding football player and received a scholarship to play football in college. However his career in sports was sidelined when he broke his leg in several places. After he graduated in 1973, he attended El Camino Junior College but spent more time watching girls than going to class. Rick began his career with the City in 1980, first with DWP and later with the Public Works. He married Yvette Williams in 1983.

He received several awards for his service to the City: a Directors Award of Appreciation issued by the Public Works Bureau of Street Services in 2001; Outstanding Customer Service Awards issued by the Bureau of Street Services in 1999, 2001 and 2003; and many others.

Rick's lifelong love for motorcycles, fast cars and racing bikes began as a child while camping with his family who enjoyed riding minibikes, hiking and fishing. While camping at Salton Sea, Rick talked our parents into renting minibikes. I was supposed to have the first turn, but Rick took one look at that bike, knocked me and my little dog off, jumped on the bike and rode it as fast as he could. He returned two hours later when the gas tank was empty!

Rick loved sports, especially boxing. He knew more about the boxers than their own family. He carefully analyzed each fight and would challenge anyone to prove him wrong. Rick would bet on anything from who could eat the most chicken wings to who had the biggest head. His last passion was NASCAR; he went to a race and was hooked.

He loved to have a good time and spend time with good friends and family. He had more friends than anyone I knew. I once asked him why he was in the same position for so many years. He said it's simple. "I love my job and the guys on my crew," he said. "We are not just co-workers, we are family and friends, I really love those guys. I love working with them and I love going to work each day. Love and laughter that is what life is about."

Rick's fun-loving, easy-going manner, mischievous smile and infectious laugh will truly be missed. There will always be a missing part in my life, but I will always be blessed because I could not have prayed for a better big brother who had such a passion for life and was so compassionate to others. I will truly miss my only brother.

— Contributed by Karen Garris, Rick's sister

Tributes

"Big Rick" and Rene, on to greener pastures. We will miss you both.
—Bela Gyimesi

"Big Rick," you were the bright sun to shine for me when I thought it was going to be a gloomy day. You will be truly missed, but we will meet again.
— Shelly Wilkes-Bradley

With tears we enter each day knowing that Rick Garris' and Rene Flores' voices will never again be vibrating our ears. I have lost two of my greatest friends, but they have given me much more with the love of their families becoming one with our family at the Bureau.

I know Rene and Rick are standing at a barbeque on top of a white cloud enjoying some barbequed ribs, and both have barbeque sauce covering their faces from ear to ear as they are laughing with such joy that each City employee has developed a real and personal closeness, a unique expression of love and realizations of just how much we all loved and enjoyed having the God given gift of having both of them as a part of our life.

I shall always miss them, never forget them and forever love them.
— Bennie Williams

"Big Rick:" Strong, talented, devoted, humorous, kind, my friend. His life is one that will be missed, but not forgotten.
— Bob Garcia

There are but a few landmarks in one's life that will never be forgotten - Rene and Rick are two of them.
— Dennis Weber, Division Manger, Special Projects Division

To speak of Rick and Rene is to recognize two individuals whose commitment to their work and fellow crew members was unquestioned. They were collectively and separately two of the finest people I have ever had the opportunity to know and work with. No matter what challenges came their way, they and the guys with Bridge Crew #165 approached every situation with a resolve to attain their goals. That comes from a mindset that they were all part of the finest crew that Special Projects Division has stepping up to the line each day! After sharing in the grief of losing two of our best with their families, co-workers and friends, we can all say with pride that we were blessed to have them as part of our lives as long as we did. We miss them!
— Dean Harding

Rene and Rick were special, kind, caring and cheerful, as well as dedicated, accountable, dependable and responsible friends!
— Neil Lienhard, Senior Mechanic, Lot Cleaning Division

Rick was a co-worker and friend. His insight on boxing I will miss.
— Rudy Aguillar

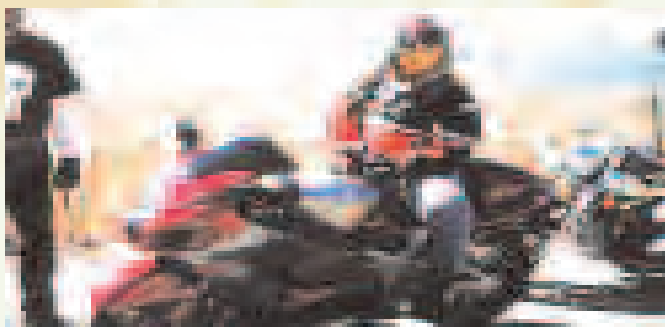
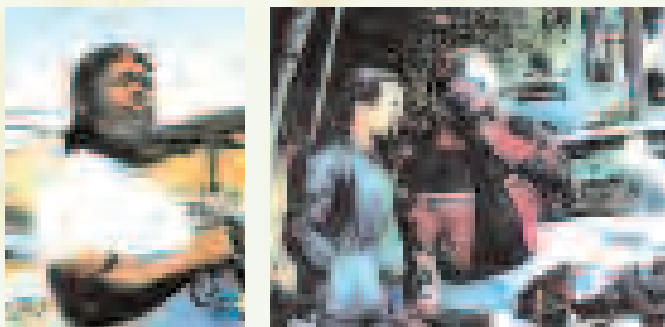
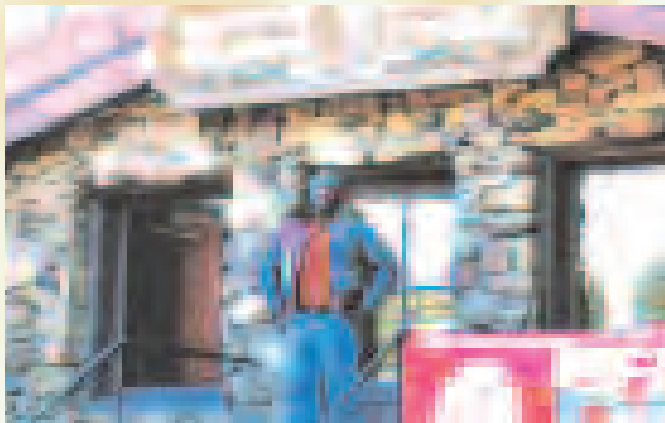
Rick was a man who, if he saw that you were down, he would do his best to raise your spirits. One of the best motorcycles rides I ever took was with Rene.
— Pat Singleton

Rick was willing to do whatever it took and gladly, always with a smile and a joke. Rick and Rene are deeply missed and will always be in my thoughts.
— Rick Croymans

Ricardo Garris 1955 - 2005

The Club pays tribute to Rick Garris, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his dedication to City service. Rick was killed along with his co-worker Rene Flores Feb. 24 while on duty.

Here are tributes to "Big Rick" from family and friends.



The City Employees Club of Los Angeles
Paying tribute to those who gave their lives in service.