

Ex-producer of 'Tonight Show' from El Paso dies

By Stephanie Sanchez

El Paso Times

EL PASO — Rudy F. Tellez, an El Paso native and former producer of NBC's "Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson in the 1960s, died last week in Albuquerque.

He was 78, his wife said.

Tellez died after a long struggle to recover from a stroke he suffered in 2002, said his wife, Tenaya Torres-Tellez.



R. Tellez in 1988

Tellez, who graduated from Texas Western College, now the University of Texas at El Paso, with a master's degree in English, began his career at KTSM radio and television.

He was a radio producer and on-air personality who hosted "Morning Watch," "The 4:30 Hop" and "Off the Record," according to El Paso Times archives.

After starting his career in El Paso, Tellez moved to California, where he produced the Les Crane radio show. He later produced the NBC "Tomorrow Show" with Tom Snyder, co-produced "The Wacky World of Jonathan Winters," and co-produced the "The Battle of the Network Stars."

"Comedy and controversy were things that really sparked his interest," Torres-Tellez said in a written statement. "He loved people, he loved humor, he loved to have a humor aspect to his shows."

Torres-Tellez said her husband would be remembered most as the four-year producer of the "Tonight Show" starring Johnny Carson in the 1960s.

While producing the "Tonight Show," Tellez was nominated for two Emmy Awards. He later won two Emmy Awards for creating "Both Sides Now" and "Barbour's Half-Hour."

Tellez was named UTEP's Outstanding-Ex in 1970 and 1988.

In 2001, Tellez, who worked 46 years in the broadcast industry, taught a course on the business of entertainment at UTEP as a teaching fellow. He and his wife also founded KASK-FM in Las Cruces.

Tellez is survived by his wife and two sons, Steve Tellez and Keith Tellez.

Funeral services will be Friday in Albuquerque.

In lieu of flower, Torres-Tellez asked that donations be sent to the Rudy Tellez Tribute to Stroke Awareness; P.O. Box 91234; Albuquerque, NM 87199-1234.