

# Former state rep. Valles dies at 62

By Ramon Bracamontes  
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Bobby Valles, a longtime El Paso politician and a former state representative who pleaded guilty to misusing public funds while in office, died in El Paso on March 4 after a yearlong bout with cancer, his son said Tuesday.



**Valles**

He was 62. Valles, who lived in Austin and Las Vegas most recently, moved back to El Paso in November after his chemotherapy sessions ended, said his son, Robert "Bo" Valles Jr.

"El Paso is where he wanted to pass, and he did," his son said. "He wanted it all to be quiet and personal, and that's how we kept it. That was his wish."

Valles was cremated, and his remains were sent to the state cemetery in Austin, where he had a plot which he earned be-

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## Valles

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cause he was a state representative from 1977 to 1984. He also worked in Austin as a lobbyist for Capital Consultants Inc.

Former El Paso Mayor Bill Tihney worked with Valles before he was a state representative and afterward.

"He was a remarkable individual who I admire for pulling himself up from his bootstraps to help this city, the city he loved," Tihney said. "He was most proud of his family and children."

While in office, Valles pleaded guilty in 1984 to four counts of felony misconduct. The four-term state lawmaker admitted paying off a \$9,000

gambling debt to a bookie by putting the bookie's wife on his legislative payroll. She did not do any work but was paid by the state, records show.

He was sentenced to four years of probation and ordered to repay \$9,000. However, Valles was later sent to prison for violating probation by being arrested for driving under the influence. He spent three years in prison.

A former El Paso Times Austin reporter and current Hearst reporter based in San Antonio, Gary Scharer, was among those who regularly stayed in contact with Valles, even up to his death.

"Bobby was one of those special folks with a lot of charm and charisma," Scharer said. "He had a drinking problem in his earlier life that

got him into trouble with gambling and triggered other complications. But he never gave up... and never stopped trying to help folks. Most importantly, Bobby found peace and contentment in his later years. He always found a way to laugh at life's absurdities."

Valles worked hard to make things happen, Scharer said.

"El Paso's Sun Bowl game probably would have died except that Bobby leaned on Al Erwin, then the powerful chairman of the UT Board of Regents, to expand the stadium," Scharer said. "As Bobby tells us, they drew up a plan on the back of a cocktail napkin at one of the Capitol's nearby watering holes."

Valles, who was on the House Appropriations Committee, was able to secure the

funding to expand the Sun Bowl to its current 52,000 seats from 28,000.

Robert "Bo" Valles Jr. said that while his family is fully aware of what the elder Valles did for El Paso, he rarely went into details with his children about his political accomplishments.

"He liked dealing with people, talking to different people," the son said. "He would sit and talk to random people for hours."

Valles is survived by his three children, Bo Valles, James Christopher Valles and Jenelle McKinny; and his wife, Elodia Valles, whom he married months before he died.

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