



Ralph Padilla

June 28, 2024

Ralph Padilla, age 58, of Pittsgrove Township, NJ passed away on Friday, June 28, 2024. Born in Northampton County, PA, he was the son of Rafael and Rosa Padilla who predeceased him. He was the husband of Elba since 1988, the proud father of Ryan, Ray and Gabriella, brother to Ray Aquino and his wife Joni, uncle to Courtney Schrader and her husband Kevin and Chelsea Aquino, and great uncle to Capri Schrader.

Ralph was a career public servant, first starting his career at a local police department in Northern NJ, a County Detective at the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office prior to transferring to the Salem County Prosecutor's Office. During his career he was assigned to the U.S. Justice Department-DEA where he worked long term undercover investigations as the sole undercover on investigations. The results led to the arrest of an international drug cartel member suspected of importing ton quantities of narcotics into the United States and laundering of drug proceeds. During his law enforcement career he was recognized by the U.S. Justice Department, DEA, FBI, United States Marshalls Office, Federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, NJ State Police, and county law enforcement agencies.

He received U.S. Senate, N.J. Senate and Assembly resolutions for his law enforcement accomplishments. In 2011 he retired after serving as Chief of Detectives, being the first Latino to hold that position in the State of New Jersey.

After his law enforcement career he headed a consultant group specializing in

professional risk management.

He went on to become the first Hispanic ever to be elected to public office in Salem County in 2013 as Mayor of Pittsgrove. He went on to break another glass ceiling by becoming the first Latino to serve as the Chairman of the Board for the Memorial Hospital of Salem County. He served on a multitude of boards and commissions including being Chairman of the United Way of Salem County, President NJ State Chiefs' of Prosecutor's Office Det./Inv. Association, Salem Co. Community College Foundation Board, Salem Co. Chamber of Commerce and other various organizations.

He was a trailblazer when it came to initiatives related to empowering Latinos throughout the state by identifying qualified Latinos to serve in the State Judiciary, Law Enforcement Executives, Board members for school districts, hospital boards, just to name a few.

Many referred to him as "Palanca" when it came to politics. An influential man who had an uncanny ability to work with members of both sides of the political spectrum for projects that benefited those most needy in our communities. His greatest joy was the relationship that he had with his longtime wife/partner and friend Elba. Together they raised three beautiful children and three spectacular labs Jake, Luna and Layla. He was proud that his children continued the family tradition of public service and being a voice for those often in our communities.

His favorite quote and challenge to others was "What will be your LEGACY". Services will be held on Saturday, July 6, 2024 at Adams Funeral Home, 64 Broad Street, Woodstown, NJ 08098. There will be a visitation starting at 10 AM leading to the funeral service at 12 Noon. Interment will follow at Olivet Cemetery in Pittsgrove, NJ.

Rest well Chief, you fought the good fight, we'll take it from here.

Cemetery Details

Olivet Cemetery

933 Centerton Road
Pittsgrove, NJ 08318

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 6. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Adams Funeral Home
64 Broad St.
Woodstown, NJ 08098
adamsfuneralhome@comcast.net

Service

JUL 6. 12:00 PM (ET)

Adams Funeral Home
64 Broad St.
Woodstown, NJ 08098
adamsfuneralhome@comcast.net

Tribute Wall

BB

“ I am sorry to just learn of this. Ralph was a great man and I enjoyed working with him in law enforcement, security work, and politics. A great man! My condolences! 🙏 Bob Bianchi

Bobby Bianchi - December 25, 2025 at 08:55 AM

CM

“ Carol Molinari Monks lit a candle in memory of Ralph Padilla



Carol Molinari Monks - July 09, 2024 at 06:36 PM

DB

“ My Family and the Pittsgrove Blast Soccer Families are saddened to hear the news of the loss of Coach Ralph. We enjoyed our moments together on the practice and game fields. Coach Ralph was a Beloved Husband and Proud Father of Elba, Ryan, Ray, & Gabby. He was ALWAYS encouraging to our children and the times they enjoyed together at tournaments, and most of all the Hotel stays together in various locations. He was a caring and compassionate person and will be MISSED by ALL.

Darryl Bennett & The Pittsgrove Blast - July 06, 2024 at 04:04 PM

RP

“ *Rev. Dr. Kevin M. Peterson lit a candle in memory of Ralph Padilla*



Rev. Dr. Kevin M. Peterson - July 05, 2024 at 11:26 PM

FF

“ *From the Aquino Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Ralph Padilla.*



From the Aquino Family - July 05, 2024 at 01:51 PM

AF

“ *My prayers and condolences to the family. I wanted to take a moment to thank you all for allowing Ralph to be a source of inspiration for the NJ Hispanic Leadership Association. He was very resourceful and loved by all; his memories will forever be in our hearts. Blessings.*

Angel Fuentes - July 05, 2024 at 01:34 PM

SD

“ *Condolences to the Padilla Family, friends and all of the organizations that Ralph touched. Ralph came along side Rev. Dorn as one of our original members of the Advisory Board of Generation Station LLC in Logan Township. We appreciated his participation, although brief.*

We pray for the family and honor his bravery and strength. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

*Rest Easy Mr. Padilla,
Sandra Scott Drew, Carla Smith McCrorey
Generation Station LLC
Logan Township, NJ 08085*

Sandra Scott Drew - July 05, 2024 at 01:25 PM

JV

“ *Jasmin V. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.*

Jasmin V. - July 05, 2024 at 12:12 PM

EH

“ My deepest condolences to the Padilla Family. I have known Ralph for over 25 years. I met Chief early in my LE career and had the honor and privilege to work many cases with him. He was a great police officer, but he was an even better person. Our conversation consisted of life and family, and he always emphasized how important family was and to be present. His love lives on forever through his family and everyone who has had the pleasure to meet him. He was more than a friend to me he was a brother. Rest in Peace my brother, may God Bless you and your family for eternity.

The Hernandez family will always remember Ralph.

Barbara, Korynn, Harper and Elliot Hernandez (and the PRAC family)

Elliot Hernandez - July 05, 2024 at 10:52 AM



“ Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Ralph Padilla.



July 05, 2024 at 09:30 AM

AL

“ Condolences, to The Padilla Family, the entire Lopez Family is at a loss for words, as we had nothing but respect and love, for Chief Padilla, Elba and the entire family.

We were honored to have witnessed all of your great work for the Hispanic Community. To say, you will be missed is a understatement! Your Legacy, will continue and I can say that “you made, everyone who called you a friend a better human being”.

The Lopez Family, loved Ralph Padilla and always, will.....Until we meet again, Sir! 🙏🙏🙏🙏

André, Carmen, Jonathan, Kenny & Chris Lopez

Andre Lopez - July 04, 2024 at 03:35 PM

BF

“ Beacon of Hope Inc family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Ralph Padilla.



Beacon of Hope Inc family - July 03, 2024 at 01:05 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Ralph Padilla.



July 03, 2024 at 01:04 PM

FM

“ Frank and Maria purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Ralph Padilla.



Frank and Maria - July 03, 2024 at 12:25 PM

RL

“ Our condolences & prayers to the family, loved one & the PRAC organization. May the good leader Ralph Padilla rest in peace with the Almighty . (fr Ramon & Maria Laurel)

Ramon Laurel - July 03, 2024 at 12:09 PM

LO

“ La Orocoveña planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.

La Orocoveña - July 03, 2024 at 11:29 AM

LO

“ La Orocoveña purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Ralph Padilla.



La Orocoveña - July 03, 2024 at 11:29 AM

CC

“ Carolyn Crisafi lit a candle in memory of Ralph Padilla



Carolyn Crisafi - July 02, 2024 at 10:37 PM

CC

“ I met Ralph through a store I managed. He'd stop in after he had lunch and I would have a 1/4 lb of cashews bagged up and waiting. He would always come in and say hi young lady, how are you today. We would talk about his wife and kids but what we had in common most was our love of dogs. Rest easy Ralph, may God rest and Bless your soul.

Carolyn Crisafi - July 02, 2024 at 10:36 PM

SO

“ Salem County Clerk's Office purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Ralph Padilla.



Salem County Clerk's Office - July 02, 2024 at 09:20 PM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Ralph Padilla.



July 02, 2024 at 10:14 AM

JF

“ Judge Lopez and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.

Judge Lopez and Family - July 02, 2024 at 08:51 AM

JF

“ Judge Lopez and Family purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Ralph Padilla.



Judge Lopez and Family - July 02, 2024 at 08:51 AM

MK

“ My deepest condolences to the family Padilla. I am fortunate to have known Ralph since my Camden Police days and he will always be remembered as "One Good Cop and Great Person". His love, greatness and legacy lives on forever through his family and everyone who has had the pleasure to meet him. Rest in Peace my friend, may God Bless you and your family for eternity.



Mike Kantner - July 02, 2024 at 08:21 AM

LS

“ Love your work family at S.C.C.F purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Ralph Padilla.



Love your work family at S.C.C.F - July 01, 2024 at 10:43 PM

LN

“ My condolences to the family. Ralph was an outstanding law enforcement officer. I had the pleasure to meet him while I worked at Vineland Police Department. He will be missed very much.

Luis Negron - July 01, 2024 at 07:29 PM



“ Ralph will be remembered dearly for his kindness and generous service to others. I am so grateful I had the opportunity to work with him when he was mayor of Pittsgrove—praying for him as he now rests in peace and for you, his beautiful family for whom he held in eternal love.

Gabrielle Chinnici-Heyel - July 01, 2024 at 03:10 PM

TS

“ The S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.

The S. - July 01, 2024 at 02:49 PM

PM

“ Patricia Massare lit a candle in memory of Ralph Padilla



Patricia Massare - July 01, 2024 at 01:35 PM

CC

“ *Calvary Community Development Corp.
purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for
the family of Ralph Padilla.*



Calvary Community Development Corp. - July 01, 2024 at
10:45 AM

GB

“ I worked with Ralph between 1993 and 2000. I was with DEA. Ralph & I made lots of local impact cases and a series of international cases, arresting a lot of high level traffickers. In these, Ralph was the undercover agent, playing the Puerto Rican/Colombian nephew of our informant. I transferred to Philly, and then to Harrisburg. Although he did not relocate, he came with me and we continued to work together. We seized millions of \$\$ and lots of drugs. We had a lot of fun and did some good work.

In later years, we always maintained contact, and we would laugh about our experiences, the crazy things that happened. I'll keep those memories forever.

Most important, we would spend a lot of time talking about what is important - family. He loved and was so proud of Elba, Ryan, Ray, Gabi, and Layla! He was prouder of their successes than he was of his own.

Over the 30 years, I really enjoyed watching Ralph grow into the man, husband, father and man that he was. Amazing. I'll always think of him as a brother.

To paraphrase from St Peter, Ralph fought the good fight, he finished the race, he kept the faith.

God Bless You, Ralph. I hope to see you again - too many stories to tell.

I'm asking God to provide the family with peace and understanding. Will see you on Saturday!

With love & respect,
Greg Borland

Gregory Borland - July 01, 2024 at 10:10 AM



“ To Elba, Ryan, Gabby and especially Ray. He was so very proud of his family and a friend to us all. He will be missed. Rest in peace Ralph.

Joe Mannella - July 01, 2024 at 09:45 AM

JM

“ Joseph M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.

Joseph M. - July 01, 2024 at 09:36 AM

PD

“ Pennsville Police Department planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph Padilla.

Pennsville Police Department - July 01, 2024 at 09:28 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Ralph Padilla.



July 01, 2024 at 09:28 AM

MN

“ We met in the academy in 1987 and remained connected throughout our professional careers. While I haven't seen Don Jefe since we both retired, he always remained and remains as one of the most gifted and talented law enforcement professionals I have engaged in the biz. His uncanny ability to get along with others in the law enforcement ecosystem AND get things done the right way was contagious... I certainly was a better person and law-enforcement professional for it... My memories of him are everlasting. Rest ez, Ralphy

Mark Stephen Nicholas - July 01, 2024 at 07:04 AM

NE

“ *It was always a pleasure working and talking to Ralph. He will be missed.*

Neal Evans, Lt. Retired Cumberland County Prosecutors Office

Neal Evans - June 30, 2024 at 11:22 PM



“ *I just received the news and I am heartbroken. You did so much for the community. You made the world a better place. You helped others throughout your life. You inspired us all. You always called us, "young lady" even if we were old. I loved that. You were a devoted husband, in love with your wife. You were an amazing father. You helped those in need behind the scenes. You were humble and kind and you made the world a better place. You left a legacy and we will miss you dear friend. Thank you for caring. Thank you for being a light in the dark.*

Heidi Maria Brown - June 30, 2024 at 10:23 PM