

Today, Congressman Quigley delivered the following remarks on the House floor:

Madam Speaker, Isaac Asimov once said, "If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster."

For my dear friend and journalist, Carlos Hernandez Gomez, it wasn't a matter of if. A year ago, he was diagnosed with cancer and, tragically, this week he lost his battle.

He was 36 years young.

For a year, Carlos never allowed a disease destroying him inside to show outside.

He wrote, he reported, he lived. He never brooded.

His courageous fight showed his strength as a person and a journalist committed to the ideals of a more responsive and transparent government.

There have been countless tributes to Carlos this week, both humorous and tearful,

from the interns he graciously mentored at Public Radio,

to the President of the United States, whom he tenaciously covered when no one outside of Springfield, Illinois knew his name or how to pronounce it.

That's because Carlos treated everyone like a person and made it impossible not to adore him.

Whether it was a witty nickname or a spot-on impression of a politician, Carlos brought everyone down to earth with his disarming sense of humor.

He had an encyclopedic memory and irrepressible hunger to learn.

As a political reporter, those came in handy.

He could remember names and details from election cycles and court cases as if they'd happened yesterday.

As a person, this was just his nature. He asked his nurses about their families and could recall lyrics to obscure Beatles' songs without missing a beat.

His energy was infectious and his passion for life was unmistakable.

To know him was to love him.

Carlos attended Quigley Preparatory Seminary – no relation – and then studied philosophy at DePaul University.

He once said that if he wasn't a reporter, he would have been a priest.

He went on to work at Extra News, Los Angeles' La Opinion, the Chicago Reporter, Chicago Public Radio, the Chicago Reader, and most recently, CLTV.

With his trademark fedora and thick-rimmed black glasses, he was a throwback to a bygone era of journalism.

Carlos had such an insatiable need to cram details, insight and vivid description into his reports that his producers tried to slow down his quick delivery.

While he heeded their words, he would sneak it in at the very end of his pieces, seemingly reducing “Carlos Hernandez Gomez” to one syllable with a heartwarming Puerto Rican lilt.

It was a trademark that became just as recognizable as his hat.

His sign-off was so familiar that taxi drivers – who listened to him loyally on public radio and recognized his distinctive voice – would often give him free rides.

He was an old-school reporter, and he was a consummate Chicagoan who loved his town like family.

He loved the official facets of the job – interviewing officials, pounding the pavement, working the political and court beats he knew so well.

But he also knew that he could often get people at their most real on a bar stool at the Billy Goat Tavern or over a pastrami sandwich at Manny's.

He covered the famous and the infamous – from Mayor Daley to Rod Blagojevich, from mob bosses to George Ryan, the news of whose indictment he was the first to break.

He wasn't afraid to criticize the status quo, but he did so with such credibility that even the powers that be whose feathers he'd ruffled respected him.

He was determined not to dumb down the news.

He would rather do a thorough story about a complicated issue than a quick, superficial hit.

His commitment to the truth was matched only by his unwavering faith, which he would tell you were one and the same.

He also loved Star Wars, Italian beef, the guitar, and his wife.

At the hospital this weekend, someone said that he was leaving us too soon, that 36 years wasn't enough.

His brother Jason and his cousin Mark agreed, but pointed out that he packed more life into 36 years than many of us could hope to do in twice the time.

Today, it is hard to find solace in that revelation.

For his family, friends, and all of us who knew Carlos, this is no way to begin 2010.

On Sunday night, I heard news about some questionable choices made by a local candidate, and smiled.

This was exactly the kind of story Carlos would have loved to cover – to find the truth and report it, meticulously and with panache.

Even in death, Carlos Hernandez Gomez will brighten our days, and for that, we tip our fedoras and lift our bowed heads back up.

He will be missed.

Quigley Pays Tribute to Carlos Hernandez Gomez

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