



Rafael Rodríguez_Vazquez

October 7, 1945 - October 19, 2025

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Rafael Rodríguez Vázquez, affectionately known by many names — Fello, Rafo, Rafi, Don Rafa, Rodríguez, and “El Sr. de las Orquídeas” — passed away peacefully on the night of Sunday, October 19, 2025, in Sarasota, Florida, just a week and half after celebrating his 80th birthday.

Rafael was born on October 7, 1945, in Utuado, Puerto Rico, to Juan Rodríguez and Rosa Vázquez. One of five siblings, (Junior, Gloria, Angelo, Orlando) he grew up surrounded by the mountains and nature that would later define so much of his life.

He married the love of his life, Mercy Tulier, and together they raised their daughter, Melissa. Rafael and Mercy made their home in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, where he spent most of his life as a devoted husband, father, and friend. A true lover of nature and animals, Rafael dedicated his career to the Jardín Botánico of the University of Puerto Rico, from which he retired in 2011.

His lifelong passion was the cultivation of orchids. As the founder of Sunrise Orchids, he became widely respected in the orchid community and was a proud member of the Orchid Society, where he received numerous awards

and honors for his dedication and expertise. Rafael generously shared his knowledge with all who admired and cultivated a love for these extraordinary flowers.

Rafael was a man of deep faith and spirituality. He found God not only in prayer but in the beauty of nature. He often spoke of the soul's journey, of reincarnation, of energy, and of the eternal bond between all beings.

He had a gift for storytelling, often sharing his wisdom and experiences of history, culture, poetry and song; with warmth and humor. His kindness, curiosity, and gentle spirit touched everyone who knew him.

After the passing of his beloved wife in 2016, Rafael remained in Puerto Rico up until 2023, when he moved to Bradenton, Florida, to live with his daughter and grandson. He spent the final years of his life surrounded by love and care. He found great joy in his role as a grandfather "Yoyo Rafa", sharing laughter, stories, and tender moments that will be cherished forever.

He is survived by his daughter, Melissa Rodríguez; his cherished grandson, Nicolás Acevedo of Bradenton, Florida; and his sister, Gloria Rendón, of Long Island, New York.

Rafael's life will be celebrated with love and gratitude by all who were fortunate to know him. His legacy will continue to bloom in every orchid he tended, every story he shared, and every heart he inspired.

In accordance with his wishes, Rafael was cremated. No formal service will be held. His family will later return his remains to his beloved Puerto Rico, his birthplace and forever home, where he will be honored and remembered with love.

“Un día me derribaré como árbol muerto
y me levantaré de nuevo sin ningún esfuerzo
sin cargas, ni ataduras, ni tormentos
El cuerpo se quedará para alimentar el suelo
Seguiré solo a otra dimensión que no conozco
Recordaré entonces, que no estoy muerto
Nada muere en el silencio de la vida
Todo se cambia para renacer de nuevo” - Rafael Rodriguez Vázquez

Tribute Wall

ME

“ 3 files added to the album *Rafael*



melissa - October 27, 2025 at 05:34 PM