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Anchorage Daily News

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## **Former Alaska House Speaker Ramona Barnes dead at 65**

By MIKE CHAMBERS, Associated Press Writer

*(Published: November 26, 2003)*

JUNEAU (AP) - Ramona Barnes - a tough-talking, gritty Republican from Anchorage who rose to be the first woman speaker of the House, died Wednesday. She was 65.

Barnes served 20 years in the Legislature, first elected in 1978, and gained a reputation for taking care of her friends and punishing her enemies.

She died at Providence Alaska Medical Center after being hospitalized on Monday. The cause of death was not immediately disclosed.

The family referred calls to Barnes' lawyer, Bill Cook, who said she had been hospitalized several times in the last year and had suffered repeated bouts of pneumonia and kidney problems.

"She had been very ill for quite some time," Cook said.

Barnes came to Alaska as a military wife and was elected to the state House after serving on the Elmendorf Air Force Base school board.

Once in the Legislature, Barnes found a passion for managing the egos and ideology of politicians to craft end-of-session deals.

"Basically the Legislature was her life," said Eleanor Wolfe, who served as a legislative aid to Barnes for 12 years and remained her friend after the lawmaker lost re-election in 2000.

"Very tough, very shrewd," Wolfe said. "Ramona never really paid much attention to party except when she was running (for election)."

Barnes became House speaker in 1993 with the help of a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers that included an unprecedented 18 freshmen lawmakers.

House Speaker Pete Kott, R-Eagle River, was among that group of newcomers.

"She took us under her wing and steered us in directions that I think left a lasting legacy now," said Kott. "We are still steering the ship in the direction she left us."

Also in that group were former House Speaker Brian Porter and the powerful former chairman of the House Finance Committee, Eldon Mulder, and current co-chairman Bill Williams.

Barnes was born in Pikeville, Tenn., and balanced a soft Tennessee drawl with a hard tongue that often got her in trouble. Senate President Rick Halford said Barnes argued her stand on issues with "velocity and volume."

Defending her state-paid travel on the House floor in 1992, Barnes caused a stir with the state of Wyoming by calling Cheyenne "the pits of the earth."

Under attack by an Alaska Native lawmaker for a lack of spending on rural water and sewer projects, Barnes called the lawmaker a bigot who hated white people. Barnes later apologized for the remarks.

On her desk, Barnes displayed a pair of brass balls - actually 2-pound fishing sinkers painted gold - given to her by Halford as a joke.

"I think people recognized her as one of the guys," Kott said. "That was the reason for the brass balls."

In later years, Halford gave her a small pocketknife with a small light on the end of it that she later jokingly called her "new neutering knife."

Barnes was a social conservative who pushed for greater resource development - especially oil - in Alaska.

Bill Allen, the president and CEO of politically influential Anchorage oil

field services company Veco Corp., has been close friends with Barnes for years, he said.

"She had the influence to do whatever she wanted to do," Allen said.

Barnes was also the first woman to hold every legislative leadership position from majority leader to minority whip. Divorced and the mother of three children, Barnes was proud of what she had accomplished in life, Allen said.

"She believed she raised her kids and put the bread on the table," he said.

Gov. Frank Murkowski ordered state flags to be lowered to half-staff to honor Barnes and Matilda Stepovich, wife of Alaska's last territorial, Gov. Mike Stepovich. Matilda Stepovich, 81, died Tuesday in Medford, Ore.

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## **Anchorage lawmaker known for her grit, gumption and grace**

**Representative served through 3 decades, including as speaker**

By SHEILA TOOMEY

Anchorage Daily News

*(Published: November 27, 2003)*

Governors joked about her hair, and more than once she threatened to "rearrange the anatomy" of men who defied her. The daughter of a southern sheriff, she rose to become the first female speaker of the Alaska State House, and, for a brief moment, the most powerful woman in Alaska politics.

When she died Wednesday, one name was enough: Ramona.

Former 10-term legislator Ramona Barnes, 65, died in Anchorage early Wednesday at Providence Alaska Medical Center, succumbing, friends said, to the pneumonia that plagued her for years.

Visitations will be Friday from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. at Witzleben's Bragaw Chapel. Funeral plans have not yet been announced.

Ramona Lee Etta Barnes was born on July 7, 1938, in Pikeville, Tenn., a small town north of Chattanooga, the second of four children.



Her colleagues knew Ramona Barnes to be stubborn, tough, a hard worker who sometimes got lost in the details, a loyal friend and a fighter for Republican goals. *(Photo by Erik Hill / Anchorage Daily News archives 1998)*

Her father was a fur trader and county sheriff, a Republican who took her campaigning when she was 10. Her grandfather and uncles were politically active, and a local school was named after her grandmother.

"I grew up wanting to be the first lady sheriff of the county," Barnes once said. "I grew up believing I could be anything I wanted to be."

In her life before elective politics, according to Barnes, she was a military wife who raised three children, wrote for a county newspaper, worked for the CIA in the Philippines as an undercover agent against black marketing and counterfeiting, and managed a beauty school and salon in Anchorage.

Barnes and her husband, an Air Force pilot, arrived in Anchorage in 1971, their seventh transfer in 10 years. By 1976, she was embroiled in on-base education issues and ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the Anchorage School Board. The race gave her "a taste of working on issues," said former state Sen. Rick Halford, who was in the Legislature during the 20 years Barnes served there after her first victory in 1978. "I think her identity was pretty much political," Halford said.

The legend -- some complain it became a caricature -- began to accrue as soon as she arrived in Juneau in January 1979. A bunch of young male Democrats, called the Ad Hocs, had taken control of the House. When the leadership failed to name a single female lawmaker to any House committee, freshman Barnes upbraided the speaker in front of an audience, formed a protest group called Old



Ramona Barnes in a photo accompanying a 1980 newspaper article. ( )



Rep. Ramona Barnes told the House minority what she thought as they caucused in the parking lot of the Capitol as adjournment neared in Juneau. (Photo by Fran

Gals In Government and went to the press.

*Durner / Anchorage Daily  
News archive 1990)*

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Barnes' representation of East Anchorage touched four decades, from 1979 to 2000, except for one term when she was beaten in the 1984 Republican primary. She lost her seat for the last time in 2000 to Rep. Harry Crawford, a Democrat. Last year, she filed to run again but had to withdraw because of poor health.

[Click on photo to enlarge](#)

She had back surgery in 2001 and never fully recovered, said Alyce Hanley, a former legislator who called Barnes "a true friend."

To people watching from a distance over the years, Barnes was a fascinating mix of unpolished brashness and unexpected uncertainty. She once had to apologize for calling a fellow legislator a "jackass" on the House floor. But she stopped wearing pantsuits in the House chamber when a male colleague told her "it wasn't very ladylike."

She did it "so he would never have the opportunity to say it again," Barnes explained.

On the other hand, she was unrepentant when shortly after her 1993 elevation to speaker someone discovered the Michigan State College she had listed for years on her resume was actually Michigan State College of Beauty and Culture. No one would care, she predicted. And she was right.

In her prime, Barnes was a physically formidable woman. Running into her on the street or at a meeting was always an adventure. Would she crush you to her bosom with gushing affection, flay you with caustic criticism or cut you dead?

When people who worked with Barnes talk about her, the conversation moves quickly from politics to style. Colleagues knew her as stubborn, tough, a hard worker who sometimes got bogged down in details and lost track of the big picture, a loyal friend, a fighter for Republican goals, sometimes a bully, sometimes a softy, a politician who tended to dig in her heels but whose word was gold.

Ben Grussendorf, speaker before Barnes, remembers finding her in the clerk's office once, trying to kidnap the official copy of a bill the House had passed over her objections so it couldn't be sent to the Senate and

become law.

"They don't come tougher," Grussendorf said.

"Ramona had a way of negotiating where your opinions were opinions and her opinions were facts," said Halford, a former president of the state Senate.

"I found her style to be what was needed at the time to produce focus and discipline," said Randy Ruedrich, head of the Republican Party of Alaska.

After years as minority leader, Barnes put together a coalition of Republicans and just enough Democrats to take control and, in January 1993, she was elected speaker of the House, the first woman in Alaska history to hold that job.

Republicans have controlled the House ever since, Ruedrich said.

In terms of legislation, Barnes did not leave an easily definable legacy. Her general focus was pro-development and anti-subsistence, but she worked on many issues including the Alaska Railroad and the Department of Corrections.

"Historians will see her thumbprint on many of those things that were put into place to develop and grow Alaska, said Gail Phillips, who succeeded Barnes to the speakership. Phillips said Barnes' combative style, effective at the time, probably wouldn't work now.

"By the time I got in, the idea of cooperation and working with each other to get things done had taken hold," Phillips said.

By the end of her career, Barnes was probably the best-known legislator in Alaska, thanks in part to her fondness for 1970s helmetlike hair styles and her much publicized smoking. In 1983, she was the first person officially reported for violating a nascent anti-smoking law by puffing away during a House committee debate over extending the ban. Her answer was always that she never drank or gambled and was entitled to one vice.

But when someone really wanted to pick on her, they made a joke about her hair, the most famous being former Gov. Jay Hammond's claim that he would "never trust anyone who had their hair done by a welder."

When Hammond was quoted in the newspaper, Barnes responded with a touch of class. She sent flowers to the reporter with a card that read: "My hairdresser prefers to think of herself as a sculptor."

Barnes was twice married and twice divorced. She is survived by three grown children and several grandchildren.

Daily News reporter Sheila Toomey can be reached at [stoomey@adn.com](mailto:stoomey@adn.com).

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## Voice of the Times

*(Published: November 28, 2003)*

### **A LEGISLATOR WITHOUT PEER: Ramona Barnes**

WHEN RAMONA BARNES first went to the Legislature in January 1979, the state of Alaska was exactly 20 years old. When she died Wednesday morning, the state was just 5 1/2 weeks shy of its 45th anniversary. For a quarter of a century, even as her health declined in recent years, she remained one of the most powerful political figures in Alaska history.

She knew the Legislature's workings like the captain of a battleship knows every gear and motor that keeps it in fighting trim. Like a sea captain at war, she was a fighter. Never one to mince words, never one for subtleties when a direct hit would win the day, Ramona < everyone called her by her first name - was not a timid lawmaker.

Her colleagues admired her tenacity and skill, and gave her credit for being what she was - an up-front, no-hidden-agendas person who knew the ins and outs of legislative operations as few others have, before or since.

Some in Juneau feared her. Her wrath could be biting, her tongue sharp, her memory long, her tolerance of fools extremely limited. Yet for all her gruff demeanor, she had a tender side that made her beloved to friends who stood by her, in her vigorous days of leadership and in the days of late when she became physically frail.

In Juneau and on the campaign trail in Anchorage, she was tireless. A Republican through and through, she was a leader in the fight to toughen the state's anti-crime laws, particularly during her service as

House Judiciary Committee chairman. Among other things, she led the fight to make it a crime in suspected drunken driving cases to refuse to take a breath test - a measure now in place in all 50 states.

An avid supporter of environmentally sound development of Alaska's natural resources, she was fully aware of and responsive to the plight of those in need.

When she arrived in Juneau for the first time, as a freshman member of the House in the 11th State Legislature, she joined some of Alaska's most storied political leaders.

Republican Clem Tillion of Halibut Cove was the president of the Senate, serving with such luminaries as Jalmar Kerttula of Palmer, Bill Ray of Juneau, Arliss Sturgulewski and Ed Dankworth of Anchorage. In the House, Democrat Terry Gardiner of Ketchikan was speaker, and among her new colleagues were Sam Cotten of Eagle River, Joe Montgomery and Terry Martin of Anchorage, Jim Duncan of Juneau and Hugh Malone of Kenai.

It was a rich training ground, one that paid big rewards when she was elevated to House speaker in the 1993-94 sessions.

Rumona's last bid for re-election was in 2000, and she came up 745 votes short of winning another term. "I've had the privilege to serve for over 20 years," she said, "and I'm extremely grateful for that."

She served long and well. Alaskans everywhere have reason also to be grateful.

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## Opinion

*(Published: November 28, 2003)*

Ramona Barnes

Fierce friend, fierce foe for 20 years in the House

Ramona Barnes, a Republican from East Anchorage by way of Tennessee, had a reputation for toughness well tested in 20 years in Alaska's House of Representatives. She died at home Wednesday at age 65.

She wasn't afraid of going nose-to-nose with anyone -- colleagues, commissioners, oil executives. She relished the fray.

"I don't know a lot about gas," she told an audience of oil company leaders in 1997. "But I do know when I'm being handed a line of bull. So we won't have any of that."

She once railed at demonstrating state workers to take their chants out of the Capitol Building because she thought it showed a lack of respect.

One of her nicknames was Rambona.

Ms. Barnes was first elected to the House in 1978. She served for six years and then lost a re-election bid in 1984, but won election again in 1986 and served seven terms before losing to Democrat Harry Crawford in 2000. She served as majority leader and Speaker of the House, and even when she didn't serve in the leadership she was a force who could deliver more votes than her own. Until her defeat in 2000 she commanded the loyalty of an East Anchorage constituency that crossed

party lines.

While critics justly said she was too personal and reactionary in her politics, it also was true that if she felt she knew you and could trust you, there was genuine affection that transcended politics.

She once told a reporter she preferred the description "strong-willed" to tough. "Tough doesn't come across very dignified," she said.

Ms. Barnes had a strong sense of her own dignity and that of the House she served in. She had a broad knowledge of House rules and procedures and little patience with those who ignored or forgot them. The House was a home for her, the place the girl from Tennessee made her mark in a man's world and earned the respect of friend and foe alike. She'll be long remembered.

She was a fixture in Alaska public life. Both supporters and adversaries offer condolences to her family and friends.

Longtime Alaskan William L. "Billy" Smith II died Nov. 18, 2003, at Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage after a lengthy illness.

A service will be at 11 a.m. Dec. 6 at the Hotel Captain Cook. His ashes will be scattered on the Kougatok Mountains.

Mr. Smith was born Dec. 27, 1926, in Seattle to William L. Smith I and Barbara Haering Smith.

He became an Alaska resident in 1926. He served in the Alaska Communications Corp. in 1944 and later was self-employed in the mining industry.

Mr. Smith lived in many places in Alaska, including Kotzebue, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Valdez, Cordova, Seward and Juneau.

His hobbies included playing poker and pinochle, and poetry.

His family states, "He once said, 'No one should be required to go south of Ketchikan.' "

He is survived by his brother, James Smith of Mountain Lake Terrace, Wash.; sister, Jane Drebaum of Seattle; daughters, Katherine Gale of Anchorage and Sheryl Glick of Vermont; sons, William L. Smith III of Anchorage and James Smith of Wasilla; and many grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Funeral arrangements made with Witzleben Family Funeral Homes.

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### **Barnes changed course of Alaska history**

ADN 11/29/2003

Longtime Anchorage resident Ramona Barnes, 65, died Nov. 26, 2003, at Providence Alaska Medical Center after a long battle with several illnesses.

Visitation will be from 1 to 4 p.m. today

at Witzleben Funeral Home, 1707 S. Bragaw St. A funeral will be at 3 p.m. Sunday at Anchorage Baptist Temple, Baxter Road and Northern Lights Boulevard.

Ms. Barnes was born July 7, 1938, in Pikeville, Tenn.

She came to Alaska in 1972 as a military wife and mother of three children.

Her family wrote: "Her first involvement with Alaska politics was with the Elmendorf school system and new laws affecting the education of her children. She had a deep interest in education. During the mid-'70s, Ramona became active in Anchorage community affairs and Alaska Republican politics.

She was a founder of the Anchorage Community Mental Health Center and served on the board of directors until her election to the Legislature. During this same period, she served as a trustee of the Blood Bank of Alaska and was instrumental in obtaining funding for the building. ...

"She was first elected to the Alaska Legislature in 1978 and was selected as the outstanding freshman legislator of the year. Ramona served as minority whip and then in 1983 as majority leader. She was also chairwoman of the House Judiciary Committee" and championed funding for many other improvements in Alaska law enforcement throughout her career.

"In 1993, Ramona was selected by her colleagues as the first female speaker of the House of Representatives. ... In 1995, Ramona served on the House Resources Committee, where she championed responsible resource development. ...

"She was selected by the Alaska Outdoor Council as outstanding legislator of the year for her steadfast support of Alaska sportsmen and women.

"During her 20 years of service to the people of Alaska, Ramona received numerous awards for outstanding service. A conservative Republican, Ramona believed that as a society, we are responsible for taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves. Ramona made sure everyone she encountered was treated with fairness and dignity. When Ramona gave you her word, you could 'take it to the bank.' Her word was her bond.

"She had compassion for those who called upon her with problems and fought tirelessly to protect the rights of those who were not able to fight alone. ... She played a major role in setting the direction and policy for the state of Alaska. Her accomplishments have changed the course of Alaska now and into our future. ...

"She served with distinction for 20 years, longer than any other female legislator, retiring in 2000. Alaska has lost one of its best, and the void will not soon be filled."

She is survived by her daughter, Michelle Barnes of Anchorage; sons and daughters-in-law, Michael Barnes and Rae Smith Barnes of Anchorage, and Randall Barnes of Anchorage and Michelle Barnes of Cottonwood, Calif.; grandchildren, Christopher Barnes and Patrick Barnes of Anchorage, Leia Barnes of Everett, Wash., Molly Jones and Gabriel Budke of Anchorage; great-grandson, Zack Jones of Anchorage, great-granddaughter Bella Fioree; brother and sister-in-law, Leonard and Linda Wheeler of Winchester, Tenn.; sister, Zelpha Mae Morgan of Rossville, Ga.; nieces, Natalie Wheeler of Atlanta, Nicki Wheeler Hedgepath of Nashville, Tenn.; sister-in-law, Patsy Wheeler of Chattanooga, Tenn.; and niece and nephew, Holly and Scott Wheeler of Chattanooga.

Her family added: "Like many people in military families, Ramona had a huge extended family of friends. Moving often as military families do, Ramona's friends became her adopted family. She will be missed by all."

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#### ALASKA SERVICES

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Diane Wetter, Palmer: 1 p.m., Palmer Senior Citizens Center, 831 S. Chugach St.

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# Ramona was tough, but part of that was a work of her own art

Not long before the legislative session began in 1991, Ramona Barnes slipped on the ice at her home in East Anchorage, fell and broke her right shoulder. She showed up in Juneau with her arm in a sling. When it came time to take the oath of office, she slipped her arm out of the sling and, putting her left hand under her elbow, raised her right hand.

"It hurt so bad that I couldn't help the tears rolling down my face," she told me later.

Another person might have saved herself the pain and raised her left hand. Nobody would have said anything; the woman had a broken shoulder after all. But Ramona had a well-developed sense of what was fitting and what wasn't, and she was plenty tough enough to do what she thought was right, pain be damned.

People who knew Ramona, who died last week of respiratory problems at the age of 65, quickly find themselves talking about her personality. She was a lifelong Republican and a member of the state House for 20 years, but her

**MIKE  
DOOGAN**

COMMENT



politics were not the result of a well-developed philosophy. They were an extension of who she was.

She was a determined woman. She lost her first race, a School Board election, in 1975. She lost her first attempt at a legislative seat the following year. But she didn't quit. She tried again in 1978, won, and found herself inside a bastion of male chauvinism.

Women have been part of the state Legislature since there has been one. The first, in 1959, had one female senator and two female representatives. But they have always been a minority. The values of the place are male, the

proceedings much more like a gladiatorial combat than a sewing circle.

Here's one example: Jay Hammond got a lot of mileage out of a crack he made about Ramona, who always favored a bouffant hairdo. "Never trust a woman who has her hair done by a welder." Funny, but try to imagine him making a similar joke about a man's hairstyle.

And there were a lot of locker-room comments about other parts of Ramona's anatomy besides her hair.

But the best example was provided by her political allies. After they engineered a coup to take control of the state House in 1981, her fellow Republicans decided to engage in a little friendly joshing with Ramona. So they gave her a pair of brass balls.

Ramona was able to make those values work for her because she understood them and manipulated them. She accepted the brass balls without batting an eye and put them on her desk as a reminder to visitors of who they were dealing with.

She incorporated other legislative

values into her political persona as well.

Being true to your word was good? In 20 years, I never heard a single person say she'd gone back on a commitment.

Helping your friends was good? She always helped her friends, even when it wasn't to her advantage. For example, she stood by longtime political ally Charlie Bussell long after Bussell had made himself such a political liability that he was fired from the state agency he headed.

Hurting your enemies was good? Nobody was more punishing in a political brawl than Ramona. Of one political opponent, she said, "I, for one, have about had my belly full of the jackass."

When she did things like that, people would just shake their heads and say, "That's Ramona." But that underestimates her. Some of her behavior grew out of her natural personality, but a lot of it she adopted to succeed in the Legislature, as much a part of her drive for success as becoming a master of the rules of procedure.

Some politicians might measure success in bills passed, but for Ramona success was acceptance and respect. The measure of that, for her, was being chosen the state's first woman Speaker of the House in 1993. But she didn't even let her guard down then, and when she thought the Senate wasn't treating her and her colleagues with the proper respect, she rolled them right up at the end of the session.

Every once in a while, though, Ramona would let slip that at least some of the persona she projected was an act. Like the time she blew up and stormed out of a House Finance Committee meeting because it didn't want to do what she wanted.

"I hear there was an eruption in Finance today," I said when I ran into her later in the hall.

"Yes," she said with a satisfied smile, "I pitched a fit and fell in it."

■ Mike Doogan's opinion column appears each Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. His telephone number is 257-4350, and his e-mail address is mdoogan@adn.com.

Anch Daily News 2 Dec 2003

# ge Daily News

Patrick Dougherty  
or Vice President & Editor

Steve Lindbeck  
Associate Editor

1945 by Norman C. Brown

Katherine Fanning, Editor and Publisher, 1971-1983

Lawrence Fanning, Editor and Publisher, 1967-1971



# AN ANCHORAGE UNION

## Ramona was a friend, force of nature

Let me correct a misquote. I never said, "You can't trust a woman who has her hair done by a welder." More like, "I wonder what welder does her hair?"

I never mistrusted Ramona Barnes. Her word was as firm as her follicles. I always knew precisely where she stood: often right in the middle of my back, boot heels plowing deep furrows alongside my spine.

Though later warm friends, our first encounters were hardly auspicious. While in office, I'd meet with House Republicans every Thursday and came to dread it. The reason was mostly Ramona.

Regard for others depends to a degree on how they cause you to regard yourself. Confrontations with Ramona often reduced that regard to rubble. Though I'd counsel myself to keep cool, almost always Ramona and I would end up shrieking at one another. To say we had a warm relationship is an understatement. Sometimes it was blistering hot. In the process, any illusion of self-righteousness was fried out, and I realized what a petty fellow I really was to so enjoy revenge through snide comment. Such prompted my rude reference to Ramona's coiffure as well as involvement in torpedoing her re-election. The latter was prompted by this phone call: "Though it may be mission impossible, Marco Pignalberi intends to file against Ramona. However, he believes he can only win if you'll endorse him."

After reasserting my belief that an endorsement from old, has-been politicians has about as much sustenance as chicken lip soup, I added: "Besides, I don't know what I could say about Marco other than that while my administrative assistant he exhibited abundant energy, exceptional intelligence, complete dedication and total integrity ... but in spite of those qualities I still think he might make a good legislator." I hung up and forgot about it until Marco won over seemingly insurmountable odds.

A few days later I flew into town where a

JAY  
HAMMOND  
COMMENT



store proprietor said, "Hey, you sure made up my mind on that guy Pignalberi."

"Huh. What do you mean?"

"Why that ad you ran."

"What ad?"

"This one here. I cut it out."

The ad featured an old picture of Marco and me with the ridiculous comment I'd made by phone. Three of five other customers present told me they too had voted for Marco because of that ad. Wow! Isn't that a frightening thought as to what can influence voters?

Later I was in Juneau when Ramona was closing shop. One of her staff warned me: "Ramona says she has a bone to pick with you." Fearing that bone would be my entire skeletal structure, I did my best to avoid confrontation. My best was not good enough. While sneaking down a hall, I noted an apparition in white charging my way like a mini tornado. Hoping to escape detection, I was about to plunge into the men's room when I heard: "Governor, oh governor. Just a moment, I want a word with you."

Aware the men's room really offered no sanctuary since she'd no doubt scale or shatter any stall in which I might cower, I stood my ground, steeling myself against the presumed coming onslaught. Instead, to my astonishment, Ramona swooped me into her billowing embrace and planted a kiss on my cheek. Meanwhile, totally flummoxed, I'm stammering something like: "I really didn't know they were going to run that Pignalberi ad. I never even saw it till

*To friends and opponents Ramona was two different people: To the former, a Joan D'Arc on steroids crusading for women's rights. To the latter, Ilsa Koch, sans jackboots and bullwhip.*

after the election. Blah, blah, blah."

"Oh, hush now," was her response. "I just wanted to thank you for supporting my bills last session. That showed me that you really liked me and all is forgiven."

And by George, you know she was right. From then on I really did like her, and our too infrequent subsequent crossings of paths were entirely convivial. I never failed to visit her office when in Juneau and ever was accorded a most friendly welcome and came away feeling rewarded.

Alaska will not see anyone quite like her again. Nor likely will the Good Lord. Upon entering those golden gates, I suspect already she's ordered St. Peter to hit the showers and replaced him with St. Patricia. What next? Effort to amend the Lord's prayer to read: "Our Heavenly MOTHER ..." as well as a request for an audience before the Almighty to demand He open ANWR and repeal Section D2 of ANILCA, which threw subsistence problems into our laps.

To friends and opponents Ramona was two different people: To the former, a Joan D'Arc on steroids crusading for women's rights. To the latter, Ilsa Koch, sans jackboots and bullwhip. To me she was a friend whom I came to cherish. I feel deprived by her much-too-early departure.

■ Jay Hammond was governor of Alaska from 1974 to 1982.

## Many will miss the tenacity of the late Ramona Barnes

Ms. Toomey's article on Ramona Barnes brought back some memories, and I would like to make one correction and add one story ("Anchorage lawmaker known for her grit, gumption and grace," Nov. 27).

The period in question was 1979-80 during the D2 Lands fight in Congress. Ramona was among a group of legislators who came to Washington to straighten out Congress.

The real author of the line that Ramona "went to a welder for a hairdresser" was Tom Korollogos, a formidable lobbyist hired by the state on D2 Lands. Gov. Hammond picked it up from him.

Among my responsibilities was assigning different legislators to see different senators. Knowing Ramona's style, I decided to assign her to Mark Hatfield of Oregon, a "safe" vote for us that Ramona's style could not offend. In the meeting Ramona was true to form — aggressive, no-nonsense. After she left, Hatfield turned to me and half in jest said: "Motley, if I had known that your legislature would spawn such creatures, I never would have voted for statehood."

Ramona Barnes' tenacity will be missed by many.

— Tony Motley  
former president, Citizens for the  
Management of Alaska Lands  
McLean, Va.

ANCH DAILY NEWS 4 DEC 2003