

Tiffany Rystrom (JD 77)

San Francisco Chronicle

Lawyer, public servant Tiffany Rystrom dies



Tiffany Rystrom was an attorney before becoming chairwoman of the Public Employment Relations Board. Liz Hafalia / The Chronicle

Justin Wiley, Chronicle Staff Writer

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Tiffany Rystrom, chairwoman of California's Public Employment Relations Board, died Tuesday in her Sausalito home after battling ovarian cancer. She was 66.

Before working at the state board, which oversees union conflicts for public-sector employees, **Ms. Rystrom** worked as a judicial clerk for the state appeals court, a prosecutor in Marin County and a deputy attorney for the state attorney general.

The active sportswoman and marathoner later went on to start her own law firm, where she helped the East Bay community of Rodeo win a financial settlement against a polluting oil refinery.

"**Tiffany** was magnificent in every way, she was a brilliant trial attorney, a brilliant chair of PERB, and she absolutely loved public service," said Angela Bradstreet, **Ms. Rystrom's** longtime friend and partner of 11 years. "She brought out the best in people and demanded the very best in people. The intellectual integrity in her decisions, her scrutiny of the record ... she poured her heart and soul into it."

Ms. Rystrom was born Oct. 23, 1942, in Rockford, Ill., and grew up in and around Chicago. In 1968, she graduated from the University of Illinois with a bachelor's degree in psychology and political science, and she subsequently joined the Leo Burnett Advertising Firm. **Ms. Rystrom** founded her own marketing research firm in 1971. The following year, she moved to Sausalito, where she became the first woman hired in the marketing department by Clorox Corp. in Oakland. She left marketing to pursue law.

In 1977, **Ms. Rystrom** graduated from **Golden Gate University's law school**. She became a judicial clerk of the California Court of Appeal. She then served as a deputy district attorney in Marin County before working as a deputy attorney in the attorney general's office.

Ms. Rystrom went into private practice in 1983, where her case wins included a seven-figure settlement for residents of Rodeo, who were subjected to sulfur pollution from an oil refinery.

"The need to apply the governing legal principles, with impartiality, fairness and expeditious disposition is something she was well aware of - the public was well served in the role she

served. The state of California will miss her,” said California Supreme Court Associate Justice Joyce Kennard, a friend.

In 2001, **Ms. Rystrom** joined the San Francisco-based law firm Carroll, Burdick, McDonough, where she worked until August 2007, when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed her to the Public Employment Relations Board, which rules on union-related bargaining conflicts covering more than 2 million California public-sector employees. She was promoted to head the board in February.

“She was able to get to the heart of decisions, zero in on the core element and craft decisions that would withstand legal challenges and set precedents. She has a special set of skills that she brought to a very complicated area of the law” said Susan Kennedy, Schwarzenegger’s chief of staff.

Ms. Rystrom was a pilot, a sailor, a golfer, a bicyclist and a runner. She ran four marathons - including one in her mid-40s that she finished in three hours and 32 minutes.

Ms. Rystrom is survived by Bradstreet; her sister, Julie Jordon; her brother, Jock Rystrom; and her nephew, Erik Rystrom.

A private celebration is planned. Donations can be sent to John Chan M.D. Fund for Ovarian Cancer Innovative Research (B2702), UCSF Foundation, UCSF Box 1694, San Francisco, CA 94143.