

11/23/80

RIIES

Thomas J. Rodrigues

First Democrat to head Town Council, known as 'Mr. Middletown,' at age 62

MIDDLETOWN — Thomas J. Rodrigues, 62, of 749 Jepson Lane died yesterday at Newport Hospital after a two-year illness. He was the husband of Rose Marie (Rodrigues) Rodrigues.

Born in Middletown, he was a son of the late Domingoes J. and Mary (Silveira) Rodrigues.

Mr. Rodrigues was a member of the Middletown Lions Club, the Vasco da Gama Society and the Portuguese-American Club. He was a communicant of Jesus Savior Church, Newport.

He made political history as the first Democrat elected to the Middletown Town Council and the first Democrat to be its president. Known as "Mr. Middletown," he was a driving force in making the highways of Middletown safer and was especially active in working to improve Route 114. Highway safety was one of his main concerns.

For years he ran the Middletown Heart Fund, and owned and operated Tom's Service Station and Tom's Lawn and Garden Service on East Main Road for 35 years until retiring in 1977 because of illness. He was educated in Middletown schools, was a member of the Town Council from 1965 to 1974 and was its president from 1969 to 1971. He also was elected state representative in 1974 and had served for six years and was vice chairman of the House Committee on Special Legislation.

Besides his wife he leaves four daughters, Mrs. Frances A. Smith, Mrs. Rose M. Silveira and Susan P. Rodrigues, all of Middletown, and Mrs. Mary E. Caraway of Masury, Ohio; a son, Thomas J. Rodrigues Jr. of Middletown; five brothers, John J., Domingoes J. and George J. Rodrigues, all of Middletown, Antone J. Rodrigues of Portsmouth and Benjamin J. Rodrigues of Corvallis, Oreg., and nine grandchildren.

The funeral will be held from the Hambly Funeral Home, 30 Red Cross Ave., Newport, Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. with a Mass of Christian Burial at Jesus Savior Church at 10. Burial will be in St. Columba's Cemetery.