

# IN MEMORIAM: ROSALYNN CARTER

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

Former first lady Rosalynn Carter died this afternoon at age 96, two days after entering hospice. Her husband former president Jimmy Carter remains in hospice care where he has been since February this year.

Born in Plains, Georgia, Rosalynn came from a working class family. She was salutatorian of her high school graduating class and accepted at state public school Georgia Southwestern College. She left college when she married Jimmy which was typical for young women in 1946.

Carter differed from her predecessors Lady Bird Johnson, Pat Nixon, and Betty Ford; she'd sought not to be a typical First Lady. This may in part have been due to her southern working class upbringing, the changing times during which her husband was in the White House, and in part the continued role raising their fourth child Amy while her husband Jimmy was president. While her three older brothers were adults at the time, Amy was only nine when her father was inaugurated.

Rosalynn was a staunch advocate for mental health care during Jimmy's governorship in Georgia. She remained one as First Lady, serving on the National Association of Mental Health's board of directors.

While Jimmy was in the White House, the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment faced an initial 1979 deadline for ratification. Rosalynn supported the ERA; honored by the National Organization for Women, she spoke at the 1977 National Women's Conference. Her advocacy included campaigning for Bob Graham, an ERA proponent who was elected as Florida's governor in 1978 and eventually as Senator in 1986. She played a direct role in ratification by the 35th state, calling a fence-sitting Democratic Indiana state

legislator to ask them to vote for the ERA.

Her humanitarian work didn't end when her husband left office. Co-founding with Jimmy the Carter Center, her continued mental health care advocacy was folded in with other initiatives including disease prevention, conflict resolution, and advancing peace and democracy. In later years she worked alongside her husband on Habitat for Humanity projects.

The Carter Center published a press release this afternoon which included a statement by Rosalynn's husband:

“Rosalynn was my equal partner in everything I ever accomplished,” President Carter said. “She gave me wise guidance and encouragement when I needed it. As long as Rosalynn was in the world, I always knew somebody loved and supported me.”

Rosalynn and Jimmy celebrated their 77th wedding anniversary earlier this year; she is survived by her spouse, their four children, 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.