

PEPE AND HIS PARTNER

Spanish-language broadcaster Yñiguez keeps his wife's memory with him every day BY CARY OSBORNE

Usually before every Dodger game, Spanish-language broadcaster Pepe Yñiguez will have a conversation with his wife, Margarita.

He'll tell her to look after their kids — two girls who earned their college degrees and flourished into accomplished women. He'll ask her to give him the enthusiasm and energy to do his best.

Then he'll tell her goodbye and leave Rose Hills Memorial Park to go to work.

"I'm always thinking of her," said Yñiguez, now in his 18th season as a Dodger broadcaster and the play-by-play man to Fernando Valenzuela's color for SportsNet LA's Spanish broadcasts. "She would always tell me, 'I know you can do it.'"

It will be 10 years on December 27 since Margarita Yñiguez passed away after a two-year battle with cancer. But she continues to be his biggest support while he works his dream job.

Yñiguez was born in Mexico. His first baseball T-shirt was of the Dodgers. He idolized Jaime Jarrín, and prior to attending broadcast school, contacted the Hall of Famer about breaking in and becoming a broadcaster for the Dodgers himself. Jarrín gave him valuable advice about getting his foot in the door, and Yñiguez eventually became a pregame and postgame host for Dodgers Spanish radio.

In 1997, Yñiguez was called in to pinch-hit for another Spanish broadcasting legend, René Cárdenas, who contracted bronchitis. Prior to the 1998 season, Yñiguez interviewed with then-Dodger owner Peter O'Malley to become part of the broadcast team. But he didn't tell Margarita.



Pepe Yñiguez, closing in on two decades as a Dodger announcer, keeps family close at heart, especially his late wife Margarita.

"I called her from the phone (at Dodger Stadium), and she said, 'Where have you been? You were supposed to be here and it's six (o'clock),'” Yñiguez recalled.

"I want to give you a surprise,” Yñiguez told her. Then without elaborating, he went home.

"I know you're mad at me,” he told her when they reunited face to face, "but I didn't do anything wrong.”

"I don't want to talk to you,” she insisted. "Look — I work for the Dodgers,” he finally confessed.



Pepe Yñiguez is part of a fraternity of broadcasters that includes Jorge Jarrín, Jaime Jarrín and Fernando Valenzuela (top) and Manny and Jose Mota (below left).

Margarita was stunned. “What?! What!” she exclaimed.

Yñiguez had worked as a disc jockey and radio host when he first got into broadcasting, but the goal was always to call Dodger games. He explained to Margarita that he would be on the road often, and she told him it was OK — she’d raise their two girls while he was on the road.

“I know this is what you want to do,” Yñiguez recalled her saying. “I know this

is your dream. We will support you. I will support you 150 percent. I will take care of the kids. Go ahead and do it.”

Seven years later, in the spring of 2005, Margarita felt like she had the flu and went to the doctor. Yñiguez returned home late from a road trip, put his luggage down and noticed she was awake at an unusual hour.

She had stayed up to tell him she has been diagnosed with cervical cancer. He was stunned and began crying. She told him she was going to beat it and told him to keep working.

Though she told him she’d rather die than suffer through chemotherapy and radiation, he recalled, she took the treatment and appeared to be on the road to recovery. But in 2006, a tumor was found in her brain. She had surgery to remove it while the Dodgers were in a pennant race late in the season. Dodger ownership at the time later helped get her into City of Hope, a longtime partner of the Dodgers and world-renowned treatment center for cancer.





Yñiguez, who works with Valenzuela on SportsNet LA telecasts, has longstanding relationships with numerous Dodgers, including Dave Roberts (below right) dating back to when Roberts was a player.

But eventually, Yñiguez was told that the cancer had spread throughout her body. Her battle ended two days after Christmas.

Yñiguez said it was his fellow broadcasters like Jarrín, Vin Scully and Charley Steiner who kept him positive. He remembers Scully telling him that baseball will serve as a good relief for the emotional pain he felt. It still keeps Yñiguez company, nearly a decade after his wife's passing at only 46 years old.

But away from the ballpark, whether it's for more healing or just dedication, he seeks her out.

"I miss her a lot. Every single day," Yñiguez said. "When I go on a road trip, I don't get a chance to see her. When I return (sometimes) at 8 o'clock in the night, I've called a supervisor at Rose Hills and said, 'I just got back from the road trip. Will you open the gate for me to see my wife?' He said, 'Of course.'"

Next season will be Yñiguez's 19th official year as a Dodger broadcaster — only Scully, Jarrín and Rick Monday have been doing it longer for the franchise. He still looks at it every day as a dream come true.

"This is my life," he concluded. "If something happened to me right now, I'd say I reached my goal."

He didn't do it alone, though. And he continues to have the same partner.

