

**The Career Development Subcommittee honors the first female  
Engineer Officer Promoted to Captain:**

**CAPT(ret.) Gladys Rodriguez**



CAPT Gladys Rodriguez (ret.), the first female PHS engineer to be promoted to the rank of Captain, passed away at the age of 67 on December 22, 2019, in Bethesda, Maryland.

CAPT Rodriguez grew up in the Bronx, New York. She graduated from New York University in 1974 with a degree in Electrical Engineering. After a short time working at a bank, Gladys was recruited into the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS), where she served for 30 years.

CAPT Rodriguez served at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at the Center for Devices and Radiological Health. She served in several capacities of regulatory enforcement, including review of ultraviolet and mercury vapor lamps and lasers. She was director of the Division of Enforcement B, working to ensure that only safe and effective medical devices remained on the market and helping to initiate recalls for medical devices that did not meet FDA standards.

CAPT Rodriguez was the first female PHS engineer to be promoted to the rank of Captain, effective January 1, 2000. In a ceremony held on December 9, 1999, the Chief Engineer Officer at the time, RADM Robert C. Williams, recognized CAPT Rodriguez's "career of commitment and dedication."

CAPT Rodriguez was deployed to assist in emergency recovery efforts during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 2008, she was awarded FDA's Federal Engineer of the Year by the National Society of Professional Engineers.

Above all, CAPT Rodriguez was regarded for her integrity and straightforward personality. During her lifetime, she mentored many officers and civilians in her career at FDA. Calendar year 2020 EPAC Chair, CDR Samantha Spindel remembers, "CAPT Rodriguez was a strong leader who commanded the room, yet [she] took seriously the concerns of her staff." CDR Spindel also remembers her as "dedicated and committed to her family, doting on her grandchildren."

CAPT Rodriguez' legacy of service continues, through officers currently serving on active duty, whom she recruited, converted and mentored. Even in her passing, her family asked she be remembered, in lieu of flowers, through donations to the Henry Jackson Foundation (HJF), which funds research for Walter Reed Military Medical Center.

**Sources:**

**The Tribute Archive:**

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/10274506/Gladys-Rodriguez>

**Commissioned Corps Bulletin Vol XIV, No. 2 February 2000, Page 3 “A First for PHS Commissioned Corps Engineers”**

[https://dcp.psc.gov/ccbulletin/PDF\\_docs/feb00ccb.pdf](https://dcp.psc.gov/ccbulletin/PDF_docs/feb00ccb.pdf)

**CAPT Rodriguez conducted a 510(k) Review of the Sea-Band:**

[https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh\\_docs/pdf3/K033268.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/cdrh_docs/pdf3/K033268.pdf)

**Calendar Year 2020 EPAC Chair CDR Samantha Spindel**