



NEWS

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MTA RAIL OPERATOR MARY BARRIOS FIRST WOMAN TO WIN RAIL ROADEO AND COMPETE IN THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mary Barrios' love of a challenge has paid off. She is the first woman train operator to ever win top honors in the MTA annual Rail Roadeo. She also will be the first woman to compete in the upcoming national rail roadeo championships to be held this June 6, in San Diego.

"I feel kinda proud because I'm the first woman going to the finals since the MTA started the Rail Roadeo four years ago," said Mary Barrios, or "Nena" to her friends. "The hardest part was waiting to hear what the score was!"

Barrios, who has been operating MTA's Green Line light rail car since 1995, had to last week successfully complete a simulated train course which included locating and fixing hidden train faults during a timed rail car inspection. She also was required to demonstrate her skills at precision stopping, the use of switches and signals, handling passengers in emergency situations, and following instructions of rail yard controllers.

Last but not least, there was a written quiz on safety issues.

"I like the challenge," said Barrios. "I'm a trouble shooter. If the train breaks down, you just fix it. The point is to keep the train moving."

Barrios said she discovered she liked the feeling of driving big vehicles when she joined the MTA as a part-time bus-operator for the 1984 Olympics. In 1995 she transferred to rail operations and became one of the few women rail operators in the business.

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"I'm good at it," Barrios said confidently. "It gives me a sense of freedom. You should see some of the looks I get when I pull into stations. People don't expect to see a woman operating a train!"

In spite of her recent win, Barrios says her biggest success in life is being a single mom and putting her eldest daughter, Natalie, age 19, through college. She also is mother to Nicole, age 13, and Nick, age 11.

"I'm proud as punch of Mary," said MTA manager of Rail Operations Ralph de la Cruz. "She's worked hard and has proven she's the best of the best. We've received national recognition for our rail operator training program, and I'm especially proud that we're now sending her to compete at the national championships."

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