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Metro Gold Line Operator Mary Barrios holds the distinction of being the first female operator to win the Metro Rail Rodeo with her victory in 1998. Photo by Raymond Mandujano

Oops! First Female Operator Won Metro Rail Rodeo in 1998, Not 2006

- Operators Mary Barrios and Robert Rodriguez represented Metro at APTA finals in San Diego in 1998
- Operator Vicky Maes-Melendez now joins the female winners' circle

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(May 5, 2006) When Operator Vicky Maes-Melendez won the 2006 Metro Rail Rodeo, April 22, she became only the second woman to win the annual event, a distinction first earned by Operator Mary Barrios in 1998.

MyMetro.net mistakenly reported, last week, that Maes-Melendez was the first female Rail Rodeo winner.

Barrios' 1998 teammate was Operator Robert Rodriguez, who placed third in the local contest this year and who, along with Operator Tu Phan, won the 2002 APTA International Rail Rodeo.

So, Rodriguez was eager to set the record straight in an e-mail to the editor. "In 1998, Mary Barrios, a part-time operator from the Blue Line, won first place that year."

Metro's first Rail Rodeo was held in 1995, and Barrios competed that year and in 1996 and '97 before winning in 1998.

Represented Metro at APTA finals

Along with her teammate Rodriguez, she represented Metro at the APTA International finals in San Diego. The team placed seventh among 16 competitor teams.

Barrios, 48, joined Metro as a bus operator in May 1984 and drove buses for almost 11 years out of divisions 7, 3, 18 and 5 before beginning training as a Metro Rail operator.

She was designated a rail operator in February 1995, and started as a part-timer on the Metro Green Line. Barrios later moved to the Metro Gold Line and was one of the operators who helped start service on that line.

A single mother, she lives in Los Angeles with her son Nicholas, 20. She also has two grown daughters, Natalie, 28; and Nicole, 21.

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