



Rafael E. Villadiego M.D.

May 28, 1937 - September 9, 2021

Rafael E. Villadiego, M.D. of Orlando, Florida passed away at his home next to his wife and eldest son on September 9, 2021. He was born in Cartagena, Colombia, South America. He graduated from the Universidad de Cartagena School of Medicine in December 1963. He completed his internship at Norwegian American Hospital in Chicago, Illinois and completed his pediatric residency at Louisiana State University School of Medicine Charity Hospital. He continued his studies at Charity Hospital and completed a fellowship in pediatric cardiology too.

Dr. Villadiego was eventually drafted into the U.S. Army as a Major in 1969 and served as the Chief of Pediatrics at an Army hospital in Okinawa, Japan. In 1971, he was honorably discharged from active duty and went into Army Civilian Service in Japan as a pediatrician. Rafael met the love of his life, Kyoko, while serving his country and they were married for almost 50 years.

After returning to the United States in 1975, Dr. Villadiego rejoined the military as a Commander in the U.S. Navy at the Orlando Naval Training Center. He had the honor of serving again as the Chief of Pediatric Service at the Naval Hospital. In 1983, he was promoted to the rank of Captain and transitioned into the Navy Reserve while building his own practice.

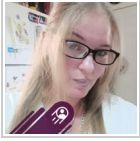
He had a dream of establishing his own medical practice on Curry Ford Road

and served his community through the Orlando Health system for almost 40 years. Dr. Villadiego was well known for providing healthcare to the Hispanic/Latino communities and providing aid to Medicaid recipients. He was one of the pioneer physicians at the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children at the time of its construction. In 1995, following 20 years of service, Dr. Villadiego retired from the Navy honorably as Captain in the Medical Corps. He continued to see patients in his own private medical practice until his retirement in 2015. Dr. Villadiego is survived by his two sons Henry and Peter, and a granddaughter Zoe.

Dr. Villadiego is expected to be buried at the Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Mims, FL. Funeral arrangements are entrusted under the care of DeGusipe Funeral Home & Crematory.

Dr. Villadiego's family invites you to leave a message of condolence or share memories on the Tribute Wall created in his loving memory.

Tribute Wall



“ I am deeply saddened and in disbelief. I was just reminiscing with my mother about my time working for Dr. Villadiego, and I can truly say that it was an honor to have met him and to have worked alongside him and his wonderful wife, Kioko. I will never forget that experience, nor the kindness Kioko showed when she arranged a small baby shower for my eldest daughter. I remain so grateful and hold many cherished memories.

Dr. Villadiego was a patient, calm, and compassionate man—highly knowledgeable and deeply devoted to the children he cared for. His gentle manner and genuine concern for his patients were truly admirable, and it was easy to see why he was so well liked by many parents.

I will always appreciate his patience and guidance while teaching me the duties and responsibilities of a medical assistant in training. He was also my children’s pediatrician, and I always felt confident in his expertise and trusted his care completely.

My heartfelt condolences go out to his family and all of his staff. I feel truly blessed to have crossed paths with such a remarkable person and to have shared a part of my life in his presence.

Odaymis Gomez-Martinez - October 17, 2025 at 08:30 PM

JE

“ I went to college at Jones College Medical Ed Center on Lee Road in 1979. When I completed my course Dr Villadiego offered me an internship which was required for my degree. I was a student from overseas at the time. He was the most generous, caring and wonderful person, doctor and boss. I even witnessed him deliver a baby with the help of the paramedics when a lady in the neighborhood walked in to say she couldn't make it to the hospital. He had exceptional diagnostic skills and all his patients loved him. I have shared my memories of working with him with my family over the years.

His assistant at the time in the front office, Anna, was also a joy to work with.

May he rest in peace.

Jennifer

Jennifer - January 19, 2024 at 02:32 PM

MC

“ Words can't describe what you have done for me. As I lay here, 28 years old, married still with asthma, I still follow your instructions to this day. You are the best pediatrician and the only one I've ever had since I was 3 years old. Finding out the news of your departure from this world broke my heart. You served your country and so many kids like me who are now grown and wouldn't be here without you. You always made the office feel like home and I was always so excited to come see you. May God bless you in heaven. You are still family to us kids.

Medaline colon - March 17, 2023 at 09:51 PM

GC

“ Para mi familia y para mi el Dr. Villadiego fue mas que un Doctor, ya que asi me lo hizo sentir él mediante la manera que cuidaba de la salud de mis hijos y como atendia las preocupaciones que como padre tenemos. Una aneodota que tengo es la siguiente: Yo lo conoci mediante mi suegra que atendia a su hijo osea mi cuñadito con el Dr. Villadiego. Al morir mi suegra yo le llame y le informe de el fallecinineto de mi suegra. El Dr. Villadiego tomo tiempo de su ocupada agenda y apoyo a la familia con su presencia en los actos funebres. Simpre lo recordare con gran cariño y a su familia mis condolencias de parte de mi familia.

Griselle Cordero - December 01, 2021 at 01:23 PM



“ Tio Rafa was a loving, kind and caring person, he made the whole family extremely proud, not only for his accomplishments but as a family member as well. As a humble man, he had such a giving heart to his family and the commitment for the community he served. We've always looked up to him. Tio Rafa, you will always be in our hearts.



On a personal level, I am so grateful they embraced me when I came to the United States to study english.

Tio Rafa will live forever in our hearts.

Lots of love,

Tatiana Villadiego

Edna Blanco - November 14, 2021 at 12:33 PM

“ Dr. V

What may I say about Doctor “V”?

I can say many things. My memories about “Dr. V’ are designed by his many admirable qualities. He was a dedicated professional, incredible boss, but mostly, an outstanding human being. For about ten years, I had the opportunity to work by his side and I was able to go through many experiences with him, which greatly marked my life. During these years under his umbrella, I was able to grow on my knowledge about how to be a server in the pediatric area. I witnessed his capabilities as a doctor who cared and understood his little patients. I will never forget one anecdote that is still engraved in my heart. There was this child at the office waiting to be seen by Dr. V. To me the child seemed “O.K’, but when Dr. V saw him he asked to run a blood test on the child. Trusting Dr. V’s observations, I followed his instructions. To my surprise, that boy was very ill. How did Dr. V, knew this creature was sick? I do not know, but that day I learned something valuable: Experience, wisdom and knowledge cannot be taught and cannot be learned at school.

Surely, I had in him an unforgettable teacher, who instilled in my heart the desire to better myself. He taught me that each one of his patients were special and their care and well being, was a responsibility that he embraced very tightly in his heart. I cannot forget his sweet and kindhearted attitude towards parents, to whom he educated by using books and available resources. Dr. V always walked the extra mile so the parents would be confident about their children progress. For this inner preoccupation he would follow up with them without limit of time. He was always updated on any new treatment or process to make sure he would offer the best of his best care. This care was also part of the way he dealt with his employees, he always had a special detail and an encouraging word.

In the year 2013, I was diagnosed with cancer, it was a real physical

and emotional struggle for myself, and my family, but Dr. V was by my side supporting and comforting me. He made sure my house financial situation did not suffer, reassuring that my place at the office was secured. He made me feel cared of and made me feel like “family”.

When he made the decision to retire it caught me by surprise, I was not expecting it. Suddenly I realized my “jeans Fridays”, my “comfy shoes” days, were over. There would be no more morning’s fights against the clock, to be at the office before him, even though many time he “won the fight”. I knew there would be no more “empanadas Colombianas” and the smell of the decaffeinated cup.

His departure from this world was really emotional to me. Because, to me he was more than a boss he was my friend, he was a person to emulate and a fatherly figure to look at. I treasured within my heart every moment, every experience, and every lesson I learned from my friend “Dr. V”. To his wife Kyoko, his children his grand children, my family and I hold you tight in our hearts, prayers and thoughts. We pray for God’s comfort and peace for your lives in this moment. I can assure to Dr. Villadiego’s family that the life and example of “Dr. V” will never be forgotten.

*Love,
Rosabel Guardiola
November 12, 2021*

Rosabel Guardiola - November 12, 2021 at 08:20 PM

JV

“ *Tío Rafa (Uncle Rafa), fuiste con tu apoyo espiritual comprensión y generosidad, una persona clave en mi vida y en la de mi madre (Edna Paulina).*

Como familia Villadiego Bockelmann, siempre sentimos tu apoyo tanto en los momentos tristes como en los alegres.

Escribo por mi otros primos, tus otros sobrinos, sé, porque me lo han expresado, la tristeza que los embarga por tu partida. Por supuesto, ni que decir de hermanita Aida.

En nombre de Edna Paulina, de Edna Tatiana y en el mío propio, nuestro agradecimiento por ser esa persona leal, cariñosa y comprometida que siempre fuiste..

Buen Viento y buena mar (como decimos en el Caribe), dónde quieras que estés.

José Ricardo

José R. Villadiego - November 12, 2021 at 02:17 PM

BR

“ I was a young Navy Corpsman in 1976 assigned to the Pediatric ward at the Orlando hospital as my first duty. Dr. Villa Diego was our chief doctor over the ward and he made quite an impression on me. No matter what was going on, he was cool like James Bond. Never yelling or flustered like some other doctors. And one of the smartest men I knew. He set the tone for how I wanted to practice medicine. After the Navy, I graduated from UCF's first nursing class and have been caring for people for over 40 years now. When I got married and had kids of my own, I took them to Dr Villa Diego and my wife was equally impressed. I just wanted his family to know how loved he was and how long and far reaching his life impacted others.
Respectfully, Bob Rice RN

Bob Rice, RN - November 07, 2021 at 12:17 PM

ER

“ After moving from Puerto Rico with my 2 children, Dr. Villadiego became our doctor. He was so kind but stern and my son behave so well. His manners with children made him a true héroe for the munchkins.

Evelyn Rivera - November 06, 2021 at 06:02 PM