

In Memoriam: Colonel Joseph Contiguglia

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Dr. Joseph Contiguglia, beloved professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences, passed away on October 1st at the age of 72, following a long illness.

Colonel Joseph Justin “The Count” Contiguglia was originally from Little Neck, New York. He earned his medical degree from the University of Siena in Italy and

completed his residency at New York University. In 1977, Contiguglia began his distinguished career in the U.S. Air Force, and entered into active duty in 1978. His career started out with an assignment to the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing, Kadena, Okinawa, where he was forward deployed with special operations forces as part of the well-known Iran hostage rescue mission. Over several decades, he would go on to serve in leading positions for military medical operations all over the world, including serving as the flight surgeon to U.S. forces for Operation Elf One in Saudi Arabia. He also served a two-year stint as chief of occupational medicine and environmental health for the Royal Australian Air Force in 1985, where he organized the largest joint combined aeromedical evacuation exercise held in the South Pacific since the end of the Vietnam War.

From 1999 until his retirement from the military, Contiguglia served as director of operational medicine and chairman of the Department of Military Medicine at Keesler Medical Center in Mississippi. He was chairman of the Keesler Medical Antiterrorism Advisory Council and a member of the executive committee of the medical center. He was also a member of the Mississippi State Department of Health Hospital Bioterrorism & Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee and served as a consultant on bioterrorism and military medicine to the Mississippi State Department.

During the course of his military service, Contiguglia found time to earn his Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine from Tulane in 1981, and during his studies here met his future wife Sylvie, a fellow student. They married and went on to have three children. He also earned an MBA from St. Mary's University in 1990.

Upon retiring from the Air Force in 2007, he returned to the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine more than thirty years after earning his degree here to help found the disaster management program. As clinical professor of environmental health sciences, he taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and continued to serve as a consultant to the State of Mississippi, helping to strengthen disaster response programs following Hurricane Katrina.

"While Joe served the world, his heart was always here with us on the Gulf Coast, creating a different kind of troops: a cadre of forces armed with weapons of knowledge and frontline expertise to fight off disasters and diseases and promote health," said Dr. Maureen Lichtveld, former chair of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences, who knew him well.

He is survived by his wife Sylvie, his sister Katherine Stone, his three children and three grandchildren. His family has said that they are grateful for the Tulane Cancer Center, especially Dr. Nakhle Saba, for their help and support during his difficult and long disease.

Col. Contiguglia will be buried in Mt. St. Mary Cemetery in Flushing, New York, at a small, family ceremony. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that money be donated to the following charities supported by Contiguglia throughout his life: Boys Town, St. Joseph Indian School, Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The Department of Environmental Health Sciences is also working with the Office of Advancement on plans to create an award in Dr. Contiguglia's memory.

The family welcomes memories and condolences at the [Lakelawn Metairie website](#).