

# LareDOS

A JOURNAL OF THE BORDERLANDS

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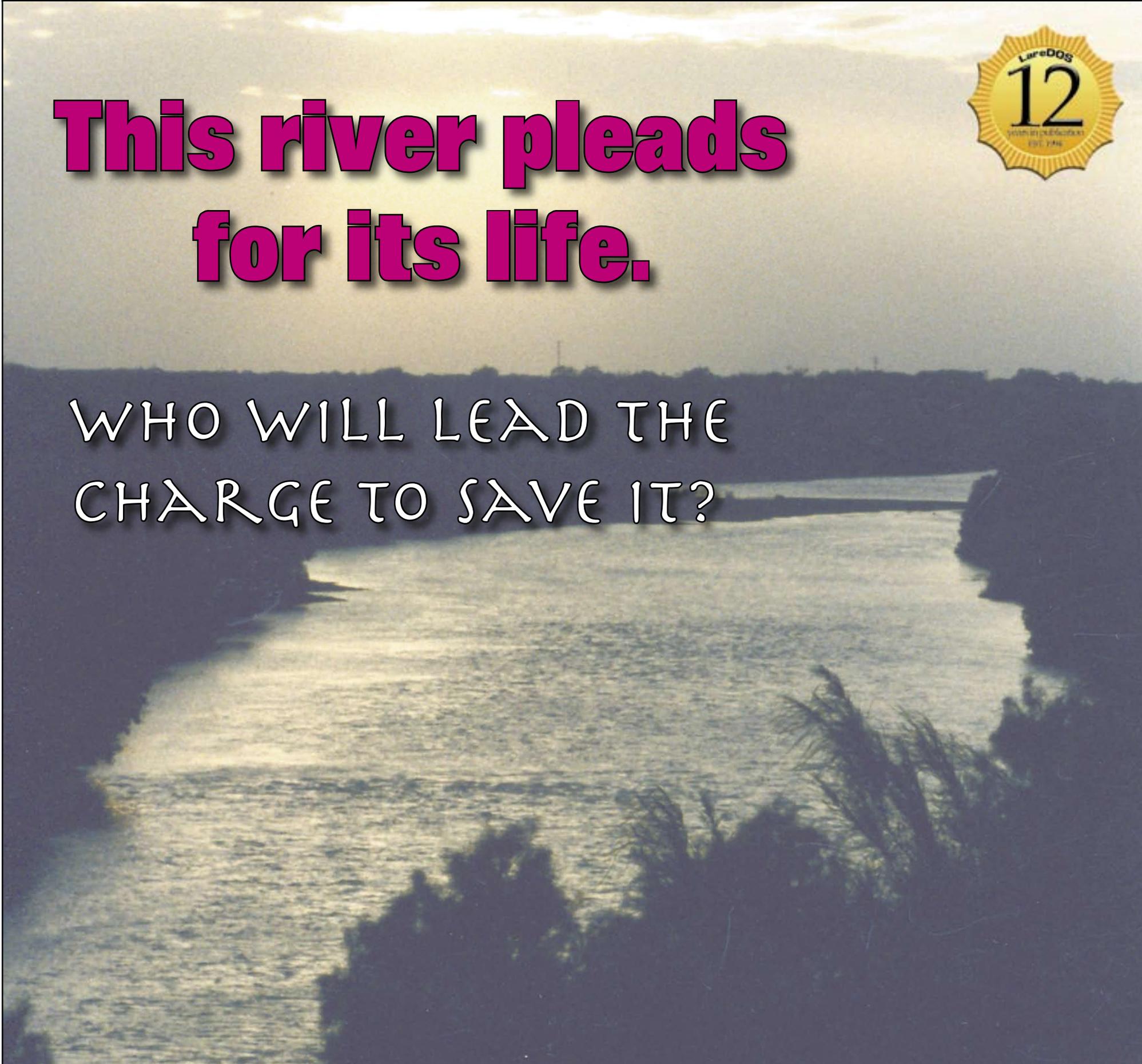
72 PAGES

People seem not to see  
that their opinion of the  
world is also a confession  
of character.  
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

**This river pleads  
for its life.**

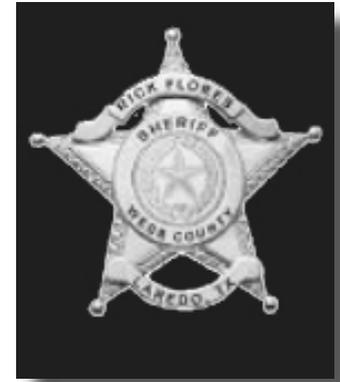


WHO WILL LEAD THE  
CHARGE TO SAVE IT?





## Setting the record straight on transportation of corpses from Webb County to SA Medical Examiner's office



Let's set the record straight on the August 16, 2006 *Laredo Morning Times* story alleging a failure of the Sheriff's Department to transport bodies from Webb County to the Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office. What I believe are factual errors in that *LMT* story and other stories on the Webb County Sheriff's Office, prompt me to share information that taxpayers need to know.

In early 2005, the Webb County Commissioners Court requested that the Sheriff's Department assist with the transportation of corpses to the Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office in an effort to try to save taxpayers' money. The request was for the transportation of bodies to San Antonio, only -- not to pick up bodies from crime scenes for transportation to the County morgue.

The Webb County Sheriff's Office and Commissioner's Court worked together to research the issue and hammer out the details of the agreement, which included budget expenditures for equipment (2 trucks), fuel, maintenance, personnel and supplies. It was determined, that if arrangements on funding and personnel could be made between the Webb County Commissioners Court and the Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Rick Flores would be willing to take on this new transportation responsibility.

When the two trucks arrived, they came without the refrigeration units. Several months later, the refrigeration units arrived and were installed, but the Commissioners Court had yet to approve personnel, maintenance costs, or a budget that would be required to put the trucks into operation. Without Commissioners Court action, the Sheriff's hands were tied in putting the plan into place or the trucks into service.

Commissioners Court, the county judge, and most citizens of Webb County need to know that more than 130 bodies are sent to the county morgue each year and that Webb County is responsible for operating the Webb County morgue -- not the Webb County Sheriff's Department. However, in an effort to help cut transportation costs, Sheriff Flores stepped up to help out Commissioners Court and the taxpayers of Webb County -- this despite the fact that the Sheriff has NO LEGAL OBLIGATION to run the morgue. Bound by law, Webb County is bound to do so.

The taxpaying public should know that the Sheriff's Department has made previous requests for budgetary assistance that would make this operation work. This year, the Sheriff's Department has been allocated one part-time driver (for half a year) and a part-time physician, instead of the two deputies requested (actually, the true need is for six deputies at peak times).

At a June 12, 2006 Commissioners Court meeting, the county judge made it clear that the refrigerated trucks didn't belong to the Sheriff's Department (which had never asked for them in the first place).

The Webb County Sheriff's Department is here to protect and serve the constituents of Webb County 24/7, 365 days a year. If you have any questions or comments on this or any other issue, please log on to our website: [www.webbcountytexas.gov/sheriff](http://www.webbcountytexas.gov/sheriff)

The Webb County Sheriff's Department also welcomes your suggestions and your help in solving crimes. If you have information about a crime, please call Crime Stoppers at (956)727-TIPS (727-8477).



# AN OPEN LETTER FROM DR. S.A. RAFATI:

## STOP BACK SURGERY!

Your back is the strongest joint in your body. Each little bone (there are 33 of them) is held to the next by an extremely intricate mechanism that cannot be altered or replaced. Hundreds of ligaments, tendons, muscles, and joints work together to give you an upright posture. The back is extremely flexible. It can move your body in any direction you want. Now imagine you have a steel rod down your spine or your spine is fused all together; then you will become extremely stiff, indeed.

There is absolutely no rationale for most back surgery. Before the surgeon applies his gadgets, he has to break your spine first. He starts by peeling off your muscles; then he scrapes all the ligaments and supportive soft tissues. Then he chips away at the bone and cartilage. He usually yanks the fibers that hold your bones together. When everything is stripped down to the bare bone, then he applies his gadgets. The gadgets I am talking about are pins (called screws), paper clips (called plates), Scotch tape (called bone chips), and glue (called cement). These gadgets will never bond with your body; they are useless.

As a Radiologist for over 30 years, I have witnessed the devastating effects of back surgery. The vast majority of back surgery ends up in complete catastrophe. Pain management has become a lucrative practice among some doctors, because there are many victims of failed back surgery. I have seen young people that are completely healthy, sent to back surgery only to end up invalids, in rehabilitation, in wheelchairs and on narcotic medications. They end up totally helpless and totally addicted. These people become the burden for society and for themselves. This is not to belittle the suffering and pain they have to endure for the rest of their lives.

Back surgery has to be stopped. Medical colleges have to come out of the closet and talk about the epidemic of back surgery. About 250,000 back surgeries are done in this country every year. The resulting damage is more painful and everlasting than asbestos, unsafe drugs, or even smoking. A smoker may suffer for a few years before he dies. A victim of back surgery does not die, but will suffer a lifetime of pain and helplessness. The indications for back surgery are very limited. The medical profession has to stand up and strictly define these indications. Back victims should stand up and form support groups and spread the word so that others could be saved.

Back pain is as common as headaches or constipation. You would not break your head to cure your headache, would you? You would not pull out your intestines to cure your constipation, would you? So why would you let a surgeon break your back? All of us suffer from back pain one day or the other. Just stay in shape, lose weight, do stretching exercises, learn how to massage your back and use simple remedies your mother knows of. Relax, be patient, and that is all you need.

*Sincerely,  
Salah A. Rafati, M.D.*

**P.S. Dr. Rafati welcomes your comments.**

**D**ear Ms. Guerra,

Thank you for your outstanding leadership in providing a high quality alternative newspaper in Laredo. I always look forward to reading each issue and read with interest your June editorial regarding the Nuevo Laredo sewage treatment plant. Because I share your concerns about the contaminated Río Grande, I authored the legislation to authorize Texas to participate in establishing the wastewater treatment plant in Nuevo Laredo. Enclosed is a letter to the publisher that describes my efforts to secure funding for the plant and actions to improve the number of municipalities in Mexico that are connected to the facility. Please always feel free to contact me for additional information regarding this or any other issue.

May God bless you and continue to inspire you to excel.

Very truly yours,  
Judith Zaffirini

(See page 6 for Senator Zaffirini's op ed)

Interesting article, "Bucking the Radio Trend." Although I know more about what goes on behind the scenes than your average person in radio, my question is this -- will you ever write something about the other radio stations? I do have to commend you on a real creative written article. Everybody knows that Guerra Communications is not the powerhouse it used to be eight years ago. How many times has it changed format in the past four years? Plus BMP Radio is real proof what a radio station can do when you have real financial backing. Yeah, the talent pool for radio in Laredo is real thin; however, Laredo does have other options other than satellite radio.

XHNK Extasis Digital 99.3, a radio station from Nuevo Laredo, is hanging with the other radio stations in Laredo. They have not changed format since 2000, yet nothing has ever been written about them. They don't give out bumper stickers, t-shirts, or awards; however, they also do live broadcast with a positive response from the clients. They are truly working with a skeleton staff, and yet they rank number seven in the Laredo market. The concept of the on-air personality is this: Once you can get sponsors to pay for your airtime, that time you purchased is just that, yours! This puts a different spin on the average DJs other than going to work and pushing a button to just collect a check. 99.3 is just what "skeleton radio" is all about.

You've heard of it, but you never knew about it: XHNK Extasis Digital 99.3 on your FM dial. Laredo wants chaos radio, then give the public what it wants. In the mornings from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Monday through Friday, you have Jay St. John along with his sidekick Bud. Does this morning show make sense? Of course not! Remember, "Chaos Radio." Jay St. John is a veteran who came from 94.9, and Bud came from Guerra Communications. In the Mid Day you have TJ Ruiz from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., another long-time veteran of radio of almost 33 years. And on the weekends only, Friday and Saturday nights, a special feature called "The Rock Spot" from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., with another long-time veteran of 13 years who came from Guerra Communications, "Spinning" Cris Garza along with his "sponsors" in crime Sir Hanz Esquire, Dr. V, and Jim Morrison (no relation). How well is a radio show doing? Just listen to the people who sponsor the shows. The sponsors come in many forms, from windshield repairs, gyms, websites, dance clubs, and gentlemen clubs to male strippers.

Laredo does have an option, except certain people choose not to listen. It gets old when people say, "Laredo radio sucks. There's nothing to listen to." I guess asking people to use the seek feature on the radio is asking too much; then never mind. Go ahead and keep using your CDs.

Carlos Villareal

Write a Letter to the Publisher: [meg@laredosnews.com](mailto:meg@laredosnews.com)

I was humbled by the expansive -- and over-praiseful -- story in the July issue about my upcoming career change.

Knowing Meg's commitment to accuracy, I was prepared for her trademark journalistic craftsmanship. However, since I am similarly familiar with her tendency to modest self-effacement, I was not surprised that an important part of our email interview was omitted from the article.

Now, dear readers, here's my complete answer:

MEG: Talk about some of the most important moments in your career as journalist and publisher that were pivotal in your development as a writer.

WANDA: Following in your footsteps at the *Pony Express* was a defining time for me. You were my hero then, and now.

With love and kisses and in the interest of full disclosure,

Fluffy Garner

Hey there, Ms. Meg, aka María Eugenia, as I've known you for several years now. You're in the truck that passes me on the road to Laredo or on the way back to this haven/heaven we call San Ygnacio. You are the lady I occasionally see at Pepe's or read about in *LareDOS*. It's great to finally meet you.

I was moved to write to you several times before in response to your poignant and powerful stories, but always managed to let life interfere with the process of writing. Today, there's no excuse. I've read and reread your countless articles throughout the years regarding your son, your late parents, life at the ranch, Laredo politics, politics in general, and now your role as a mentor and grandmother to a beautiful and curious little girl. How refreshing it was to see you in a different light, to witness the change in voice, style, and grace. Your words in print seemed a prettier shape and a softer hue.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and views on so broad a spectrum, for writing from the heart that's truthfully honest, and for being a hands on mentor to women like me who live in this quaint little town but possess big aspirations and dreams.

Fellow SYT resident,  
Ana Villarreal-Silva

## LareDOS

**PUBLISHER & EDITOR**  
María Eugenia Guerra  
[meg@laredosnews.com](mailto:meg@laredosnews.com)

**ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER**  
Tom Moore  
[editorial@laredosnews.com](mailto:editorial@laredosnews.com)

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
[rolando@laredosnews.com](mailto:rolando@laredosnews.com)

**STAFF WRITERS**  
Mike McIlvain  
[editorial@laredosnews.com](mailto:editorial@laredosnews.com)

Cristina Granados  
[editorial@laredosnews.com](mailto:editorial@laredosnews.com)

**SALES MANAGER**  
Jerry Cardenas  
[ads@laredosnews.com](mailto:ads@laredosnews.com)

**Account Executive**  
Stefan Gubser  
[ads@laredosnews.com](mailto:ads@laredosnews.com)

**CIRCULATION, BILLING  
& SUBSCRIPTIONS**  
Jorge Medina  
[jorge@laredosnews.com](mailto:jorge@laredosnews.com)

**LAYOUT/DESIGN**  
Armando Saldaña  
[ads@laredosnews.com](mailto:ads@laredosnews.com)

### CONTRIBUTORS

David Almarez  
Larry Bridgeman  
Raul Casso  
Bebe Fenstermaker  
Sissy Fenstermaker  
Wayo Foster  
Pati Guajardo  
Dr. Neo Gutierrez  
Toni Howell  
Henri Kahn  
Randy Koch  
Tom Moore  
Dr. Nasser Momayezi  
Richard Noriega  
Jenny L. Reed  
Elizabeth Sorrell  
Hilda Treviño  
Kay Wavos  
Bill Wisner

### ShuString Productions, Inc.

[www.laredosnews.com](http://www.laredosnews.com)  
1812 Houston Street Laredo Texas 78040  
Tel: (956) 791-9950 Fax: (956) 791-4737  
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# I am not taking this well: you'd think they'd moved to Dallas or D.F., rather than Del Mar

BY MARIA EUGENÍA GUERRA

The one true thing that I have treasured for the last two years has been being able to see my granddaughter Emily every day, to play with her or have breakfast with her before I get to work or to have her spend a random hour or two in my office. Emily and her parents have vacated the lovely old apartment above my office.

In the apartment, the great expanses of white walls are void of the framed photographs that tell the stories of all our lives. There are no toys or musical instruments on the wooden floors, no soothing gurgle of aquariums, no little feet running from room to room.

I am not taking this well. Of such weighted significance has been this juncture in my life that you'd think they'd moved to Dallas or D.F., rather than Del Mar.

I wanted to throw myself at Emily's beautiful little *chamorros* and wail, "Don't leave me! Don't go!" but I knew better.

We have so many wonderful memories of Emily's time here on Houston Street, the first words she spoke, the first steps she took, the first kisses she blew, her tales about Mrs. Salinas' blue heeler Bonita across the street, the lanky black dog down the street she calls "Patas largas," adding, always, "*se porta mal!*"



My office resounds with memories of her daily visits -- the way she answers the phone, "*LareDOS*;" the spot where she settles with colors and paper after saying, "*Quiero dibujar, Nana*;" her proprietary mien about her little rocking chair and bench; the trail of Post It notes on so many surfaces; the way she loves Jorge Medina, the man who holds this newspaper together; the kisses, all the kisses; the hugs I count on as though they are sustenance; the incredibly funny things she says; the comfort of so much love emanating from so tiny a being.

Emily and the apartment upstairs have been the pivot upon which our daily lives have turned for the last two years. The love of her and her love back have been the heart of that home. It's where all of our hearts have lived -- hers, mine, Malia's, George's and Rosita's. The absence of Emily and her parents speaks volumes for how much they fill my life with goodness.

Today, on this melancholy day of acknowledging my life will be different hereafter, I feel a little sorry for myself, and I tell Emily how much I will miss her, knowing as I do that "missing" or "sad" have not yet made it into her catalog of emotions. When I cry (as I do now at the slightest surge of emotion), she is a little puzzled but hugs me nonetheless, admonishing me, "Be careful, Nana. It's OK."

Taking her *consejo* to heart, I recalibrate, making the call to be assured that Emily's new home has wireless internet so that if my visits with her go into overtime, I can work there, too. ♦

READ

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A Journal of the Borderlands

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# This river pleads for its life. WHO WILL LEAD THE CHARGE TO SAVE IT?

Many thanks, Senator Zaffirini, for your expressed opinion about this publication (letters to the publisher Page 4), and thanks for your role in funding the Nuevo Laredo sewage treatment plant. Thanks, too, for your efforts to establish a TNRCC (now Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) regional office in Laredo.

Lamentably, and indicative of the TCEQ's lack of focus and commitment to take on the environmental issues of the State of Texas (and this shared river), the grossly understaffed TCEQ regional office in Laredo has only four investigators to cover a 10-county area.

BY MARÍA EUGENIA GUERRA

When the bi-nationally funded Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant (NLIWTP, sewage treatment plant) in our sister city went into operation in April 1996, this particular 10-million-gallons-a-day cascade of raw sewage into the river continued to flow unfettered as it had before and long after the plant was dedicated to all the fanfare and platitudes for progress politicians from two countries could make about, well, human excrement.

This cascade of raw sewage is not news. We have endeavored to call attention to this environmental crime on the pages of *LareDOS* over the last decade. You have only to walk to the riverbank west of the train trestle bridge to see and smell the *aguas negras* of such phenomenal filth that they remain contained in the river water in a black plume the size of a football field.

Not far from this waterfall of shit, year after year, every February, ceremonial niceties are exchanged between both cities, states, and countries on the International Bridge. Senators, congressmen, mayors, and city and county officials — perfumed and in the regalia of the *guante, pipa, y antiojo* finery of their taxpayer funded stations in life — embrace. Except for the nearby *cascada de mierda*, life at that moment is beautiful.

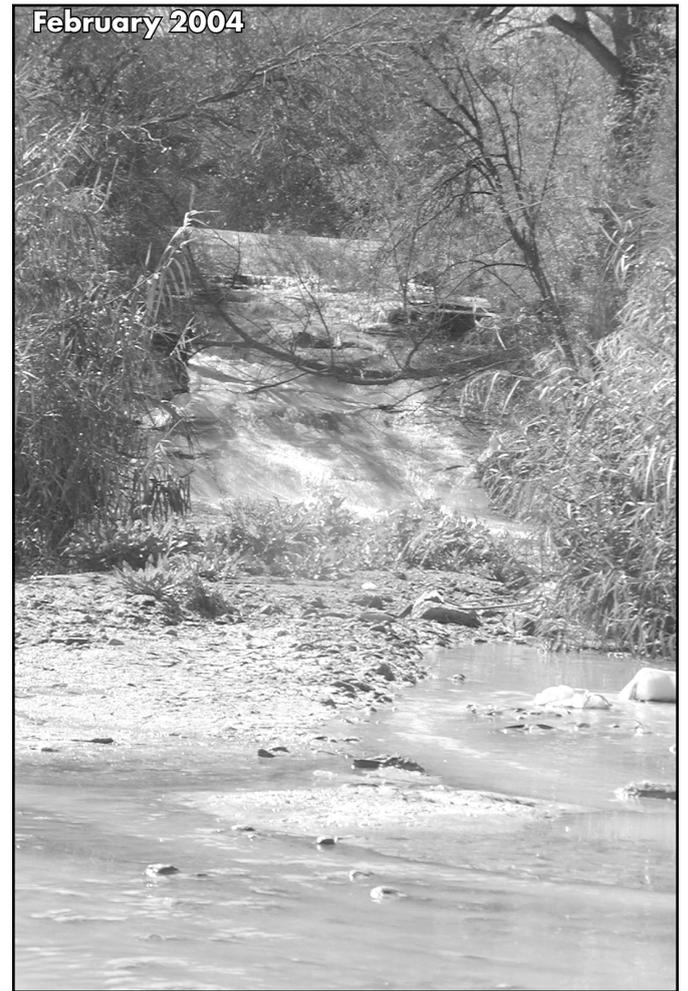
Ten million gallons a day — 3,650,000,000 (billion) gallons a year; 36,500,000,000 over the last 10 years. And not one elected official at any level of government on either side of the river, not one environmental monitoring agency on either side of the river at the state or federal level has ever addressed the issue with action. And the one agency charged specifically with providing “sensitive, timely, and fiscally responsible boundary, water, and environmental services along the United States and Mexico border region,” the International Boundary and Water Commission, has its bean-counting head so far up its own bureaucratic posterior that it cannot smell the Mexican fecal waft nor can it see the plume of shit that flows south to San Ygnacio and Zapata to find its home in the Falcón Reservoir. The fecal bacteria counts of this untreated sewage, benefiting from increased oxygen in the river flow, grows to levels well above Texas Surface Water Quality Standards.

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August 1997



February 2004



June 2006



# Clean and healthy environment critical to maintaining economic security of Laredo families

BY SENATOR JUDITH ZAFFIRINI

The June 2006 issue of *LareDOS* includes an editorial regarding the Nuevo Laredo sewage treatment plant and describes an alarming amount of raw sewage spilling into the Río Grande from Mexico. Because of my concern, I authored legislation that authorized Texas to participate in establishing the wastewater treatment plant in Nuevo Laredo. Like many residents, I have long been concerned about the water quality of our river. What's more, I have played a leadership

role in the Texas Senate to secure funding to construct the treatment plant and a pumping station.

In 1989, I worked to add a rider to the Appropriations Bill that authorized the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to contribute \$2 million of state funds to help fund the development of the Nuevo Laredo sewage treatment plant. A year earlier, the TWDB and the Texas Water Commission (now the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality), funded an intensive survey of the Río Grande in the vicinity of Laredo to assess water pollution. With the

support of the State of Texas, construction of the wastewater treatment plant started in November, 1993, and was considered substantially complete when it was placed into operation and dedicated on April 17, 1996.

Despite positive reports about the operation of the plant from the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), additional Mexican municipalities must connect to the facility to prevent additional discharges of raw wastewater to the Río Grande. Consistent with my previous action to secure

funding for the facility, I will continue to work with the TWDB and the IBWC to develop incentives and possible funding mechanisms to ensure that the Nuevo Laredo sewage treatment plant operates at full capacity. Because a clean and healthy environment is critical to maintaining the economic security of families in Laredo, I will continue to prioritize environmental quality during the forthcoming legislative session that convenes on Jan. 9, 2007. Please feel free to contact me via (956) 722-2293 regarding this or any other issue.◆

Mexico's use of the Río Grande as a communal cesspool is not the river's only dilemma. Factor in the degradation of illegal dumping and the bad land practices of Laredo developers keeping apace of NAFTA's insatiable need for bridges, roads, warehouses, commercial developments, parking lots, and homes. Factor in this City and this County's lack of leadership to safeguard this incredibly beautiful, life-giving natural resource. Factor in the apathy of the citizenry, apathy for the river, apathy that sets the table for who gets elected into public office.

There are many of us who love this great river and do all possible to stop its degradation, but in the huge shadow of developers who have far more to offer elected officials, our voices are small, and often, we are written off as tree huggers who want to stop the march of progress. The river lacks for champions and stewards who will take a position in public forums such as City Council or Commissioners Court meetings or legislative bodies, state and federal. The Río Grande lacks for public service champions, those we pay to be public servants to act in our best interests, those who could tell the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the Joint Task Force Six that it will not at Webb County and Laredo, Texas denude the river banks and destroy precious wildlife habitat to build roads at the water's edge or worse yet, build a fence to address an immigration problem that has solutions other than raping the river. Besides the obvious effects of those bad practices on the natural riparian habitat, such a drastic change on the riverbanks at the hands of tiny minds armed with huge earth moving machines would continue to add to the riv-

er's problems with siltation, turbidity, and salinity, which in turn means that potable water providers downriver will use more chemicals to remove more solids from their municipal water supplies.

The river is the broader tableau of environmental disregard. Every day Laredo developers, illegal dumpers, and private property owners do the same thing on the watershed of the Río Grande and on the tributaries that feed into the river, degrading the tributaries in smaller but no less egregious ways.

Those environmental crimes are compounded by every public servant who looks away, by every City Manager or City Council member who reacts callously to news of environmental degradation and who by doing so sets the tone for how this city will safeguard its only source of drinking water and how it will care for the watershed of the Río Grande and the river itself.

The finger flips of public servants to those who speak for the environment are a green light to developers to do as they wish to maximize their profits, to reroute creeks, to have their way with the watershed. We live in a city that will not even enforce its own Green Space Ordinance. We live in a city that used contaminated, antimony-laced soil to build the Chacon Park Hike and Bike Trails on the banks of a major tributary to the Río Grande. We live in a city that remains environmentally inert to the old antimony smelter site with its piles of that same soil subject to the vagaries of wind and runoff.

Senator, you mentioned the IBWC's bi-national study of the water quality of the Río Grande. Of what use are intensive,

costly studies if they do not foment responsible action at every level of government to correct what the studies determined? Other than providing a feel-good moment of bi-national cooperation, what has been the fruit of the IBWC's studies? The studies, which have included the efforts of the EPA and the TNRCC and their Mexican counterparts, have generated data that confirms that indeed the river is filthy with heavy metals, degraded by development and bad land practices, and that mercury was found in fish tissue at the Jefferson Street water intake, the intake for this City's municipal water supply.

There is no agency more lame in its environmental vigilance of the Río Grande than the International Boundary and Water Commission, who should be decommissioned for failure to "provide these (responsible boundary, water and environmental) services in an atmosphere of bi-national cooperation and in a manner responsive to public concerns and our stakeholders." This, the same agency that worked so deftly in the early 1950s to break thousands of hearts and wreck thousands of lives in Old Zapata and Guerrero Viejo as it dismantled and condemned many of the old, historic river settlements to the fate of inundation by the Falcón Reservoir. Same river, different tragedy and bureaucratic boondoggle.

In its first study, the 1995 study to which you refer, Senator, the IBWC executive summary reports, "Valid analytical results were obtained by the U.S. for 153 toxic chemicals in water, 145 in sediment, and 140 in fish tissue. A total of 48 toxic chemicals were detected, 30 of which exceeded the screening levels established by U.S. investigators. Valid results were obtained by Mexico for

9 conventional parameters in water and 12 heavy metals in both water and sediment. A total of 9 toxicants were identified, all of which exceeded Mexican standards."

Among those chemicals in the waters of the Río Grande in the study's "high priority" group were residual chlorine, methylene chloride, toluene, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, selenium, silver, zinc, chlordane, pp'DDE (DDT), dieldrin, gamma bcc (lindane), total PCBs, and cyanide.

The October 2002 "final" study conducted by the IBWC and a host of similarly lame agencies (EPA, TNRCC, the National Water Commission of Mexico, the Municipal Commission on Potable Water and Sewerage, the State Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology, and the State Commission on Potable Water and Sewerage) while agreeing the waters of the Río Grande are too dirty for recreational contact use, say the same water is nonetheless suitable for agriculture, fish consumption, and drinking water. You can drink it, just don't plan in it or eat the fish.

Be mindful that it is not just fecal bacteria that Nuevo Laredo jettisons into the water supply of millions of Texans and Mexicans. The effluent of its sewage treatment plant, which handles maquila waste as well as human waste, is every day dumping organic compounds such as hexachloro 1-3 butadiene, hexachloroethane, and 1-4 dichlorobenzene.\*

The IBWC's recommendations: more monitoring of the river, "more timely exchange of water quality data," "identifying the source of bacterial contamination."

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Hello! Wake up and smell the 10-million-gallon-a-day fecal waterfall!

I know of no communication between American and Mexican elected officials at any level of government regarding the Mexican sewage outfall and what immediate action could be taken to stanch the flow of this source of degradation. I know of no legislation, state or federal, no accords, no MOUs, that recognize or fund resources to address the environmental problems of this frontera.

I know of no legislation that prohibits the stripping away of the riverbank for development or for the hare-brained, erosion-causing surveillance schemes of the U.S. Border Patrol or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. And at a municipal level, even though city engineers know better, Manadas Creek and other tributaries to the river are degraded every day not only by the bad practices of developers but by the City itself as it looks away from the enforcement of its own Green Space ordinance.

Shame on all of us, Senator -- policy makers; state, city, and county engineers; bureaucrats; and elected officials -- who know better or who could enforce the ordinances and laws that would halt the degradation of the waters of the United States or the waters of the State of Texas. And shame

on the developers whose greed for another square foot of real estate on a filled-in creek bank means more to them than the life of the river from which we, and millions of citizens downriver in two countries, drink and make our lives. (For those who cannot connect the dots: what you do on the watershed of the river and the creeks that feed into the Río Grande -- Manadas, Sombretillo, Zacate, Chacon -- affects the river directly.)

Shame on all of us for paying for costly international studies on the degradation of the river, and then doing nothing. Shame on us for paying the greater part of a \$60 million sewage treatment plant that does not work at capacity. And shame on all of us, citizens and policy makers alike, for continuing to fund the ineptitude of agencies like the TECQ and the IBWC, agencies charged by government to safeguard the public's health and welfare.

Like global warming, like the news of mercury in fish tissue at the City of Laredo's Jefferson Street water plant, like our Sister City's annual goodwill bouquet of 3,650,000,000 gallons of e. coli and fecal coliform, the time for studies and debate is finished. Blame game over.

This river pleads for its life. Who will lead the charge to save it?

Senator Zaffirini, are you that voice?

\* From [www.scorecard.org/chemical-profiles/summary](http://www.scorecard.org/chemical-profiles/summary):

Hexachloro 1-3 butadiene and hexachloroethane: suspected carcinogen, cardiovascular or blood toxicant, developmental toxicant, endocrine toxicant, gastrointestinal or live toxicant, kidney toxicant, neurotoxicant, reproductive

toxicant;

1-4 dichlorobenzene: recognized carcinogen; suspected cardiovascular and blood toxicant, developmental toxicant, gastrointestinal or liver toxicant, kidney toxicant, neurotoxicant, respirator toxicant, skin or sense organ toxicant.◆

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# FEAR FACTOR

AFTER DARK IT GETS WESTERN. IT'S LIKE A WAR ZONE. BORDER SECURITY EQUALS NATIONAL SECURITY. WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE CAMOUFLAGING THEMSELVES AS MEXICANS.

BY BARBARA BELEJACK

On the morning of July 7, about a dozen protestors carrying American flags and wearing "Save Our Border" buttons gathered in a corner of Laredo's San Agustín Plaza. Across the street, about a dozen protestors from the Río Grande Valley carrying American flags and wearing United Farm Worker buttons, gathered in front of the Church of San Agustín.

Both groups had come to Laredo because of what was going on inside the La Posada Hotel that day -- a hearing of the House Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation. Chaired by U.S. Representative Ed R. Royce of California, the hearing was a blend of political theater and crass opportunism, heightened by fears of all kinds: real, unreal, and surreal. As the morning went on and the temperature rose, the committee heard from a select group of witnesses including the acting chief of the Laredo sector of the border patrol, Reynaldo Garza; Webb County Sheriff Rick Flores; Zapata County Sheriff Sigifrido ("Sigi") Gonzales; and an agent of the U.S. General Accounting Office who had once managed to smuggle radioactive material across the border without being detected. Throughout the day, representatives from both parties expounded on their own efforts to provide the Border Patrol and local law enforcement with manpower and technology.

Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Houston) repeatedly questioned the jurisdiction of the subcommittee over matters of immigration. Ruben Hinojosa (D-McAllen) said that he was

"troubled by the false promise of these hearings." Silvestre Reyes (D-El Paso, known as "Silver" to his congressional colleagues and a former Border Patrol Chief) addressed the cadre of Border Patrol officials with the air of a commanding officer. And Ted Poe (R-Houston), conflated increased violence along the border with terrorism, saying something to the effect of If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck. All in all, the gist of the Laredo hearing was more or less as follows:

*After dark it gets western. It's like a war zone. Border security equals national security. We're worried about people who are camouflaging themselves as Mexicans. Have you ever heard of an Al Qaeda camp in Mexico? This is about politics. Do you really believe jihad terrorists would blend in with our Latino community? Is it about workers or is it about terrorism? There are terrorists in our own backyard ... attempting to blend in with persons of Hispanic descent. Would it assist you in any way to deport 12 million people? Mexicans are not terrorists. What if smugglers become partners with terrorists? Terrorists want to destroy the institutions of the United States. What is it that you need in terms of manpower and technology?*

The hearing was the second in a series announced last month by House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert in a thinly disguised effort to stir up public opinion in favor of the House immigration bill passed in December, which criminalizes illegal immigrants and calls for the construction of a 700-mile border fence. Last May the Senate passed a bipartisan immigration bill -- only slightly less draconian -- which includes provisions for a guest worker program

and a program of gradual legalization of illegal immigrants, as well as increased enforcement measures. Rather than meeting in conference committee to iron out the discrepancies between the two bills -- as would normally be the case were this not such a highly charged political year and immigration such a highly charged subject -- the House and Senate are currently engaged in a seemingly endless series of hearings, both in Washington, D.C., and "in the field."

While Royce's subcommittee met in San Diego on July 5, Senator Arlen Specter, the Pennsylvania Republican who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, held his own hearing in Philadelphia, during which New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg testified that immigrants are vital to the economy of his city. Since then the hearings have continued apace. Among them: a Senate hearing in Miami that focused on the contributions of immigrants to the military and a House hearing in Washington focused on the errors of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (one of the sponsors of which, House Republicans seem to ignore, was former Wyoming Senator Alan Simpson -- no slouch in the arch-conservative department. IRCA provided for amnesty, the word that dare not be uttered in the current immigration debate). The House has scheduled another border hearing for El Paso on August 17.

Although the hearings are public, the "public" has not been invited to testify -- much to the dismay of some of those who traveled to the border. From time to time, however, the testimony in Laredo was met with bursts of applause and resounding

boos from the audience, as occurred when Jackson Lee announced that "What America is best at is not scapegoating innocent human beings," before proceeding to question the logic of a law that would "turn the Sisters of Mercy into felons," a reference to provisions in the House bill that would criminalize organizations and individuals who assist illegal immigrants. The most vocal response, however, was directed at former Laredo Mayor Betty Flores. Ever the booster of her community, Flores said that Laredo was part of a thriving, growing metropolitan area with problems and promise just like any other, with one exception: It is not totally within the United States.

"Nuevo Laredo," she said, "is like your Arlington, Virginia." Her remark prompted guffaws from the folks in the audience sporting Save Our Border buttons -- and not without some reason. (Newspapers on both sides of the border have given up on serious investigation of criminal cartels, following the killing of a reporter at *El Mañana* in Nuevo Laredo in 2004, and subsequent attacks against that newspaper. Then again, just days after the congressional delegation met in Laredo, newspapers in Britain announced: "Spate of killings spreads fear in U.S. capital," in the wake of the fatal knifing of a British citizen in Washington, D.C.'s upscale Georgetown district and the robbery at gunpoint of two groups of tourists at the National Mall.)

By mid-afternoon, the sun was unbearably hot and the protestors in the plaza and in front of the church had disbanded. As the hearings wound down, Charlie Gonzalez (D-San Antonio) said he hoped that "we've made some progress to bring both sides together." Jackson Lee was dubious. "We all know where this is going," she said. What had happened in Laredo, she suggested, was "like throwing darts in the dark."

*This article first appeared in the July 28, 2006 issue of the Texas Observer and is reprinted with permission. Barbara Belejack is editor of the Texas Observer.◆*

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# The war rages on; in the face of government un-accountability and pernicious politics, we, the people, must demand change

BY NASSER MOMAYEZI, Ph.D.

Nasser Momayezi is a professor of political science and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at TAMU.



Many Americans are uncomfortable or concerned about the future, sensing that both at home and abroad, things are not going well. The President's unprecedented sagging popularity is indicative of this malaise in the public about America's future. There is no end in sight to the war in Iraq, which has great political and economic consequences for this country. Despite the \$500 billion the United States has so far poured into the war and its aftermath, Iraq is still struggling to establish a viable security force. An average of more than 100 civilians per day were killed in the violence in Iraq in May and June, according to a report by UN Assistance Mission in Iraq. The war has greatly distracted us from fighting Al Qaeda and religious extremists who are out to do great harm to the United States. The war has helped Islamic fundamentalism and hampered the democracy

movement in the region.

Highly ideological, well-funded interest groups and constituencies with agendas that often depart from the broader common welfare have grown in number and in influence, drowning or crowding out much of mainstream America. Both the Republican and Democratic parties have become polarized and more hostile and adversarial to one another.

Accountability of government has virtually disappeared, except when misconduct has unmistakable criminal implications. Proof of the absence of accountability is vividly in view. No high level heads have rolled over the miserably failed response to Hurricane Katrina. There has been no crusade for accountability in government, unlike the crusade against corporate misdeeds. Unlike CEOs of failing companies and those who may have broken the rules slightly (Martha Stewart) or massively (Kenneth Lay of Enron), no one was held accountable, punished, or chastised for the failed response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Congress has offered virtually no oversight on these issues, nor on fighting terrorism and Homeland security. And, equally stunning, Congress' lack of oversight has produced not a bit of public outrage.

Meanwhile, politics have become consumed with continuous campaigns staffed by political operatives who find

attack and negative ads the most effective means of defending or defeating almost all issues, from health care to confirmation of Supreme Court justices.

Even with one party controlling Congress and the White House, gridlock often occurs. When it does not, legislation is often very diluted or badly drafted, such as the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill, in which millions of American seniors could not understand how to obtain their medications, making the situation worse, not better. The great humorist Will Rogers once remarked about Congress that every time it wanted to make a joke, it passed law, and every law it passed became a joke.

Partisanship has always been present. But today, partisanship has become excessively bitter. Winning has become the goal, no matter the means that must be employed. The destructive character of partisanship is fueled by an around-the-clock media that creates a poisonous political atmosphere inimical to effective governance. Many good people are choosing not to serve in the govern-

ment or are being discouraged from service by the often pernicious politics through which even the tiniest political scratch can become septic. At the same time we face these destructive political forces at home, society's vulnerabilities have become the explicit targets for religious extremists of the Middle East, whose weapons of ideology, ideas, and terror are inherently more difficult to counter than would be enemies with large standing armies.

Corrective actions must occur soon to keep America secure, vibrant, free, and able to pursue its promise as productively in the future as it has in the past. It is we, the people, who have the power and the responsibility to restore the system of checks and balances. The only avenue to achieve these goals is through citizens willing to act with courage and commitment to demand the necessary changes to fix the dysfunctional and unsatisfactory performance of government. Unless the public engages, there is no other imperative forcing us into an effective response. ♦

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# Collection of corpses: confusion for commissioners and constabulary

BY MIKE McILVAIN

How Webb County handles the dead has been a live issue for some time and remains one with related duties under scrutiny and discussion.

Raul Casso, chief of staff for County Judge Louis Bruni, believes publicly aired disagreements with the Sheriff's Office stem from a lack of the meeting of the minds, despite what might have previously appeared to be an understanding. Bruni and commissioners believed that the Sheriff's Department would be picking up corpses after Webb County purchasing agent Eloy Ramirez turned two new trucks over to the Sheriff's Department earlier this year.

"Picking up bodies has been a sore spot with the county," Casso said.

The Webb County Auditor's Office recorded 149 invoices from four funeral homes in the 2004-2005 fiscal year, dropping to 96 in 2005-2006. Costs of those calls totaled \$150,543 in 2004-2005 and \$84,984 in 2005-2006.

Unidentified bodies and those requiring extensive forensic examination in criminal cases are frequently transported by local undertakers to the Bexar County Medical Examiner's office in San Antonio.

Casso, and Clifford Black, who is a consultant to the Webb County Sheriff's Department, both say Sheriff Rick Flores entered into talks about transporting bodies found in the county or in the river, with intentions of saving money. Definitive, concrete action reflected in the language of commissioners court proceedings, however, was lacking to make it all happen. A review of agendas and minutes from 2005 and 2006 turned up scant references to any kind of an agreement that the Sheriff's Department would transport corpses. The minutes of a Sept. 12, 2005 commissioners court meeting reflect approval for the purchase of the two vehicles at a cost of \$67,406 and a brief discussion with the Sheriff's liaison Tom Sanchez. The minutes of a meeting six months later on Feb. 13, 2006, reflect that the commissioners decided unanimously to purchase re-

frigeration units for the two trucks at a cost of \$21,022. The minutes of a June 12, 2006 meeting include a discussion of the "whereabouts of the tailgates" of those two trucks.

Casso said Webb County sought to have its own morgue unit a few years ago and floated bonds to try and bring it about, but nothing happened. The county also lacked control over which funeral homes showed up to pick up the dead.

According to Casso, Sheriff Flores stepped into a verbal crossfire when county leaders discovered to their surprise that his deputies were not picking up bodies. Webb County wants to take care of transporting the dead to combat inconsistent and high charges from funeral homes.

Casso lacked detailed funeral home transportation charges, but noted that costs ranged from \$800 to \$1,500 for indigent burials and said transport charges were similar in their inconsistent costs.

"It's about the same kind of spread to take them to San Antonio, or pick them up," he said.

Casso said the Webb County commissioners had set a limit on paying the funeral homes and bought the trucks to move duties into county hands, but notes that the trucks were never specifically assigned to the Sheriff.

Casso doesn't blame Flores for any misunderstandings and does not believe the sheriff had intentionally lied to him.

"He was never specifically given the job, but he never spoke up, either, about not picking up the bodies," Casso said. "I don't feel I was misled. They didn't ask me for anything. I can't take the position that I was purposely misled.

"He was never told to go and do it. There was no mandate to go pick up bodies. It looks like maybe they are going to do it, but it remains to be seen," Casso said.

Black, who has worked with county sheriffs in Ohio, Denton, and Laredo, isn't so sure that will happen. He doesn't see it as a normal duty for law officers.

"In large communities, this is the responsibility of the medical examiner's

office or the coroner. In smaller communities, undertakers transport bodies to the morgue. I don't think sheriff's departments across the United States transport bodies to the morgue," Black said. "The morgue's not the responsibility of the Sheriff's Department."

Key words in related conversations between Casso and the Sheriff's Office are blamed for leaving wrong impressions because law officers frequently see dead bodies in their investigations.

But that doesn't mean they get used to it.

"Why don't you come with us the next time?" Casso was asked, understanding how horrible those assignments can be. "It can be really terrible out there, finding bodies that have been in the river for a couple of weeks or out in the monte under the hot sun for some time."

Casso will be glad to finally see Webb County get its own morgue unit underway, costs of dealing with the dead reduced, and clear communication established with the Sheriff's office.

"He, the Sheriff, is not the problem. It is just a big gangly problem that's got to be taken care of," Casso said. "It's just got to be worked out. That's all there is to it. I thought they were picking up, bodies but they're not."

Black said Webb County usually has seven or eight deputies on patrol in a day shift, covering some 3,400 square miles.

Webb County has plans to hire a

two-person morgue staff, including a medical examiner, but Casso notes that they are very hard to find.

"San Antonio is there, but nine times out of 10 the local guy [medical examiner] can tell you how they died," he said.

Laredo is some six times smaller than San Antonio, where numerous Laredo-area dead are examined. The Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office employs 42 people, with one doctor and three or four autopsy technicians working each shift. One or two clerks handle receiving paperwork duties.

"It seems that there is a misunderstanding and that the only reason this subject came up is because they brought this to our attention during the 2005 budget hearings, that they were spending too much money on the transporting of bodies in the county," Sheriff Rick Flores said.

"We felt that we could help the county by reducing those costs paid to funeral homes transporting bodies to San Antonio to the medical examiner's office -- so I, in good faith, offered to assist the county in saving the money paid to funeral homes to transport them to the coroner in San Antonio," Flores said.

"It is obvious that I can't commit to picking up bodies when I don't have enough deputies to protect and serve the constituents in Webb County for which I've been lobbying before the U.S. Congress," the sheriff said.

"So definitely, I'm sure there is a misunderstanding," he added. ♦

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# Forty years after the Civil Rights Bill, some things haven't changed

BY DAVID ALMARAZ

Growing up in Hebronville, we began to notice that the Anglo community lived in the nice part of town with the nice houses and trees. We learned to refer to it as "El Barrio Americano." We went to the same school, the only one in town, but somehow surmised they were a bit different than the rest of us. They spoke a different language and had a lighter shade of skin and sometimes different-colored eyes.

As we grew older, the childhood crushes gave way to talk about us

versus them and who was invited to whose parties. Normally, if a Hispanic kid wanted to date an Anglo, the parents would frown on it and in the most extreme cases the girl would be sent off to relatives in San Antonio or Dallas. By the time we reached high school, there existed an unwritten code of whom you hung out with. For some inexplicable reason the Anglo kids we had grown up with began to have their own parties and so would the Hispanic kids.

But what really caught my attention was where we would bury our dead. Somehow, the Hispanics would

be buried in the Catholic Cemetery and Anglos were buried at Greenhill Cemetery. We never questioned the practice except to assume that no Anglo could possibly be Catholic. There was one black family in Hebronville but none of that family died before the decision had to be made where their final resting place would be. I had assumed that this subtly racist policy of separating individuals even unto death was a relic of the past.

Imagine my chagrin, as I was driving down an old country road, south of San Antonio, approaching the little town of Nixon, Texas. I spotted a cemetery that told the world it was the resting place for the Latin American dearly departed of the community. I immediately wondered if there was another cemetery nearby that proclaimed itself Anglo American

Cemetery or Polish American Cemetery or German Cemetery. I also wondered where the offspring of an Anglo or Latin American could be buried, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. I also wondered whether the City Council more than 40 years after the Civil Rights Bill was passed has thought about removing such a sign.

I know that Waco, Texas finally apologized for lynchings of 100 years ago and that the nearby town of Three Rivers is still trying to explain why they wouldn't bury a decorated war hero who had been killed in combat because he had Spanish last name and had to be transported to Arlington National Cemetery to be buried with full military honors. Here is a photo I took with my handy dandy cell phone camera, which didn't exist 40 years ago. ♦



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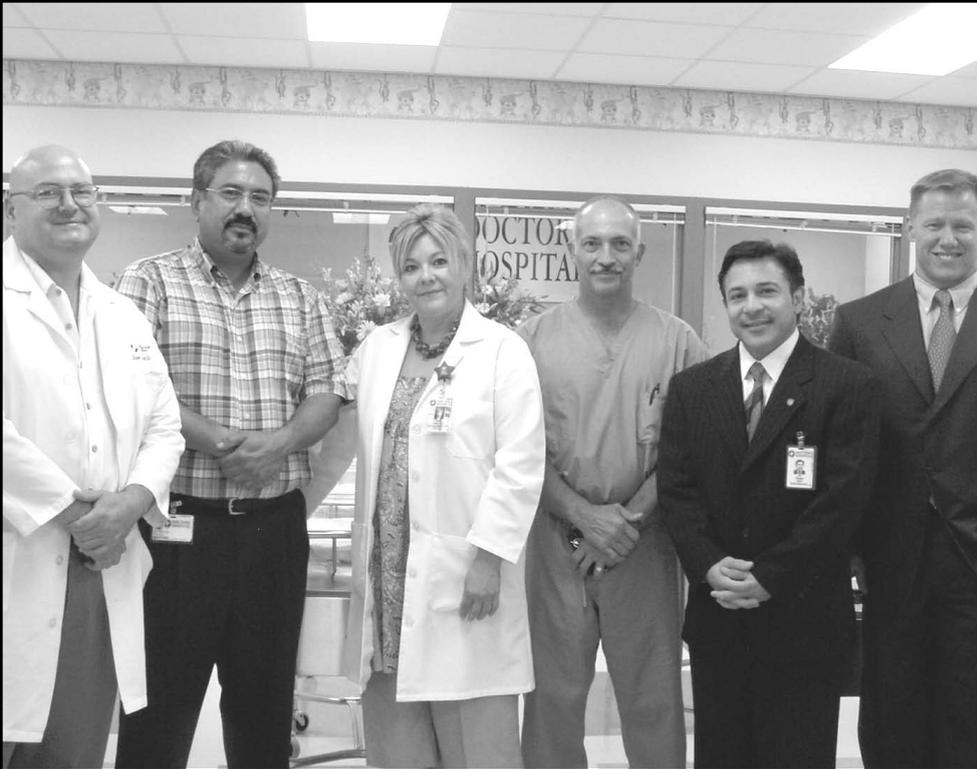
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Photos by Rolando Tijerina



**Lt. Governor Dewhurst named Mr. South Texas 2007**

The Washington's Birthday Celebration Association recently named Texas Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst Mr. South Texas 2007 at a reception at the Laredo National Bank Plaza Tower. The award is presented to an individual who has made significant contributions to the growth and development of Laredo and South Texas. Dewhurst, left, is pictured with Adrienne Treviño and James Notzon, who will portray Martha and George Washington in the 2007 WBCA festivities.

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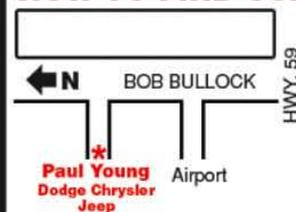
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NEXT TO THE AIRPORT ON LOOP 20

# Stage III of the Drought Contingency Plan Means Mandatory Water Conservation

The Drought Contingency Plan, consisting of 6 stages, establishes procedures for identifying and responding to a water supply emergency. It minimizes any risks to public health and safety, preserves essential public services, and minimizes any adverse impacts of a water supply emergency on the residents and economic well-being of the city. Each stage is triggered by various factors.

Consecutive high temperatures this summer have contributed to severe drought conditions throughout South Texas, including Laredo. Usually, when plant capacity total flow of 60 million gallons of water per day (MGD) is at 95% for 5 consecutive days, Stage III (and even Stage IV) may be implemented. Mandatory water conservation measures may also be implemented if minimum conservation levels of U.S. water storage in Amistad and Falcon Reservoirs are between 25% and 18%. Laredo's water demand trigger conditions existing in water treatment plant capacity of 60 MGD had been between 90-94%. Therefore, in order to prevent any water issues and continue to maintain an adequate water supply to meet the public demand, the City of Laredo took preventative measures in conserving water by implementing Stage III of the Drought Contingency Plan. This stage of the plan represents mandatory water conservation compliance from all residential and commercial water users inside corporate city limits.



**REMEMBER TO SAVE WATER.** City water customers must adhere to the water restriction schedule. Even-numbered addresses, including those without a designated address, may water **ONLY** on Mon., Wed., & Fri. before 8 a.m. (that is from 12 a.m. to 8 a.m.) and/or after 8 p.m. (up to 11:59 p.m.). Odd-numbered addresses may water **ONLY** on Tues., Thurs., & Sat. during the same times. Non-compliance will result in penalties ranging from \$20-\$100 per citation, per day.

Prohibited Water Uses Include: allowing irrigation water to run off into a gutter, ditch or drain; allowing a controllable leak to go unrepaired; and washing sidewalks, streets, driveways, parking areas, or other paved

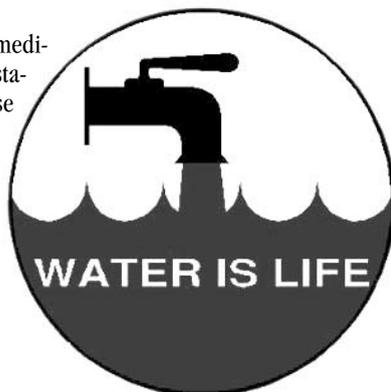
areas, except to alleviate immediate fire hazards.

Allowed Water Uses Include: irrigating (yards, athletic fields, parks, plazas and squares); washing vehicles (if done with a hand-held bucket and water hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle); refilling water to residential swimming or wading pools; and operating any ornamental fountain or other structure making similar use of water. (Hand-watering and drip-irrigating can be done anytime during your designated days.)

Water uses are not restricted for fire fighting and medical facility use. Commercial car washes and service stations are exempt from the restrictions, because those operations recycle their water.

If you would like additional information, please contact Karla Robles, Water Conservation Planner, at (956) 721-2020.

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# STUDENTS DRESS FOR SUCCESS



## Grades PK-8th

### STANDARDIZED DRESS:

The United Independent School District has adopted standardized dress for students in grades Pre-Kinder - 8th effective the 2006-2007 school year.

#### SHIRTS/BLOUSES:

1. Navy blue or white solid shirts and blouses.
2. Solid navy or white also applies to optional undershirt.
3. Shirts and blouses must have collars and sleeves.
4. No snaps or zippers allowed on shirts/blouses.
5. Turtlenecks are allowed.
6. Logos/trademarks may not be larger than one (1) Inch.
7. All shirts/blouses, and turtlenecks must be tucked in at all times.
8. No visible stripes, checks, or other designs on shirts, blouses, and turtlenecks.

#### PANTS, SHORTS, CAPRIS:

Style: Casual pants, shorts and capris. Color: Khaki, Navy Blue, Black (solid, single colors)

1. Pants must be worn at the waist, and be properly hemmed or cuffed.
2. Sweatpants, windpants, drawstring pants, warm-ups, carpenter, painter or cargo, low rise pants are not allowed.
3. Corduroy and jean (denim/colored) materials are not allowed.
4. Baggy-style pants/shorts/capris are not allowed.
5. A garment may be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee.

#### SKIRTS/SKORTS:

Color: Khaki, Navy Blue, Black (solid, single colors)

1. Skirts and skorts length must be no more than 3 inches above the top of the knee (in both front and back).
2. Skirts may have a slit/pleat which opens no higher than 3 inches above the knee.
3. Carpenter or cargo style skirts/skorts are not allowed.
4. Garments with belt loops require belts for students in grades 3rd-8th.

#### JUMPERS:

Color: Khaki, Navy Blue, Black (solid, single colors)

1. Jumpers must be no more than 3 inches above the top of the knee (in both front and back).
2. Logos/trademarks must be no larger than one (1) inch.
3. Jumpers may have a slit/pleat which opens no higher than 3 inches above the knee.
4. Standardized dress shirts, blouse, or turtleneck must be worn under the jumper at all times.

#### FOOTWEAR:

All students shall wear appropriate footwear. Students shall not wear house slippers, flip flops, or other footwear that constitutes a safety hazard. Students are also prohibited from wearing steel-toed boots/shoes and skate shoes to school.



## GUIDELINES THAT APPLY TO ALL STUDENTS:

#### STUDENT DRESS CODE:

Students must also conform to the other dress code requirements listed in the Student Code of Conduct/Student Handbook.

#### NON-UNIFORM DAYS:

Administrators shall have authority to waive the wearing of standardized dress for certain days due to special events or special activities. Students who choose not to participate in the special days are expected to wear standardized dress.

#### EXTRA-CURRICULAR DRESS CODE:

With respect to any extracurricular activities, the Administrator, in conjunction with sponsor, coach, or other employee in charge of such activity, may regulate the dress of participating students.

#### COMPLIANCE:

If a student attends school in violation of standardized dress, disciplinary

steps as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook will be taken.

#### FINAL AUTHORITY:

School Administrators will have complete and final judgment on all matters concerning interpretation of the student standardized dress. Matters concerning appearance and dress not specifically covered in FNCA (LOCAL) Policy shall be within the discretion of the administration.

#### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

In case of severe financial hardship, parents may contact the office of Student Services to request assistance when financially unable to purchase the standardized dress clothing. Please note: Having a child on the free/reduced lunch program does not automatically qualify the family for assistance.

### STANDARDIZED DRESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS PROCESS

Applications for the Standardized Dress Assistance Program are currently being accepted at the UISD Department of Student Services located at 201 Lindenwood, Laredo, Texas 78045. Applications for the Standardized Dress Assistance Program may be picked up at your child's/children's campus. In order to qualify you must meet income eligibility guidelines. **For more information call the Office of Student Services at (956) 473-6249.**

## UISD SCHEDULE PICK-UP & NEW STUDENT REGISTRATION

### All High Schools

Freshmen: August 15, 2006 from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Seniors: August 16, 2006 from 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Juniors: August 16, 2006 from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Sophomores: August 17, 2006 from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

### All Middle Schools

Sixth Grade: August 15, 2006 from 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Seventh Grade: August 16, 2006 from 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
Eighth Grade: August 17, 2006 from 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

### STEP Academy

Sixth through eighth grades: Aug. 7, 2006 from 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Freshmen Last Name A-M: Aug. 9, 2006 from 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Freshmen Last Name N-Z: Aug. 10, 2006 from 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors: Aug. 11, 2006 from 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

### New Student Registration

August 11, 2006 through August 17, 2006,  
8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.  
August 18, 2006, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.



# UISD Bond Program: the end is near



United ISD began the 2005-2006 school year with three new elementary schools: Malakoff Elementary in the San Isidro Subdivision, the new Col. Santos Benavides Elementary in the Winfield subdivision, and Fasken Elementary in the Mines Road area. As contractors finish building one middle school campus, they have already started work on a new high school. Builders are also finalizing work on other projects to expand and renovate existing campuses.

Work on the new Lamar Bruni Vergara Middle School in the southern part of the district is nearly complete. "The campus is ready," said Enrique Rangel, UISD Assistant Superintendent for Facilities, Construction and Student Services. The school will officially open its doors on the first day of classes, August 21, 2006.

Construction on a new United High School campus began in July of 2006. "Construction for the new high school will take about 36 months. We expect the school to be complete by July of 2009," Rangel said.

The District has recently acquired property for the construction of a new elementary campus. The property is located on Clark Blvd., about half of a mile east

of Loop 20. Construction on that campus will begin in 2007.

Construction of the new Nye Elementary campus began in February 2006. Work on the new Nye campus is ahead of schedule according to Rangel. "Nye Elementary will be open next school year," Rangel said. For the upcoming 2006-2007 school year, Nye students and faculty will remain at the former Col. Santos Benavides campus on Del Mar Blvd. That facility has been temporarily renamed Nye Elementary.

At L.B. Johnson High School, work on the football field, running track, and athletic field house is coming to a close. Work on phase three of the L.B.J. High School construction, a career and technology wing, begins in September. The new wing will have facilities for automotive technology, culinary arts, health applications, and computer applications and repair as well as career and technology classrooms. That project has an expected completion date of August 2007.

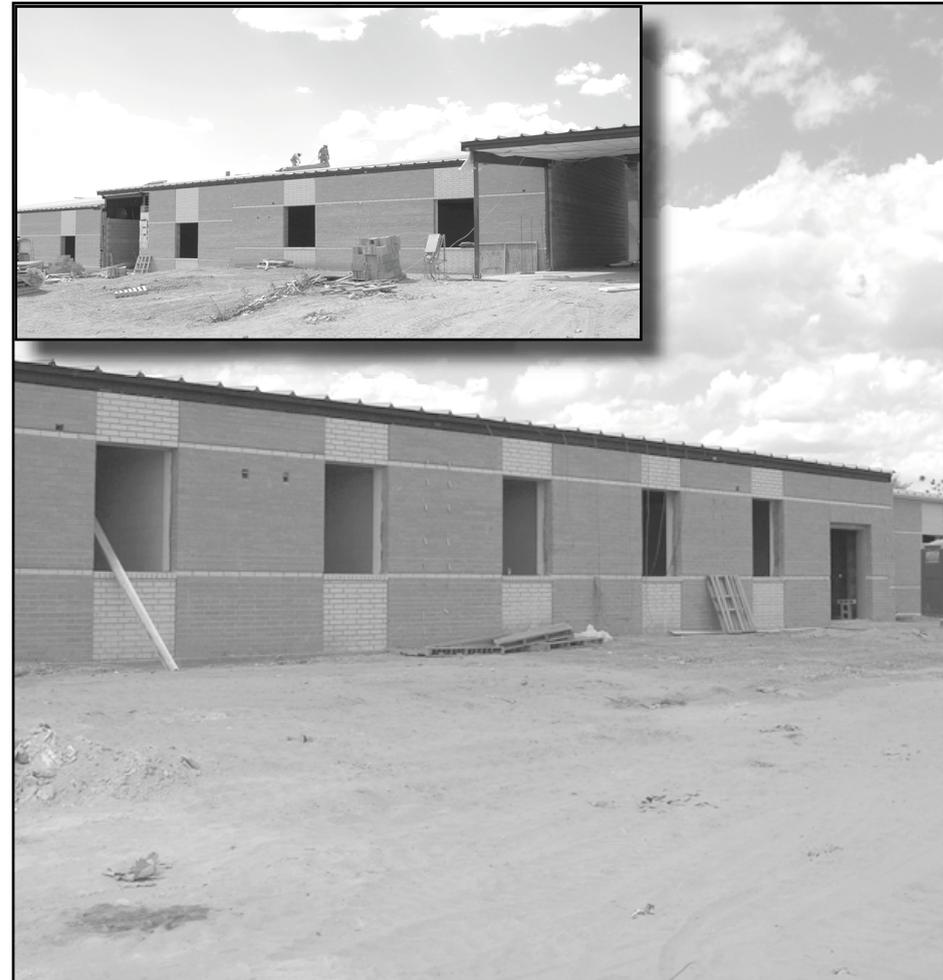
For the upcoming school year, Alexander High School will have new classrooms, a new gymnasium, a new dance-drill team studio, and improved parking facilities. United South High School will

have a classroom wing, a new building for the R.O.T.C. program, a new dance-drill team studio facility, and resurfacing of all driveways and parking lots. Work on those projects began in August 2005.

Construction of a building, adjacent to the Student Activity Complex auditorium, began in June of 2006. That facility will include two performing arts rooms, a conference room, an equipment storage room, and restrooms. Five middle school

campuses will receive additions to their existing band halls: Salvador Garcia M.S., Los Obispos M.S., United M.S., Trautmann M.S., and Washington M.S.

United ISD voters approved the issuance of construction bonds in November of 2003. In addition to renovations and additions at existing campuses, the bond program calls for the construction of one new high school, one new middle school, and six new elementary campuses. ♦



## Student On-Demand drug testing available to parents

As a parent, it is difficult to consider the fact that your child may be using illegal drugs. There are a variety of interventions parents may consider in order to confront their child.

Many parents have expressed an interest in wanting to drug test their child. In order to support these parents in their effort to keep their children "drug free," United ISD has developed an "On-Demand" drug testing program, where parents will be able to pick up a free drug test kit at their child's school. This simple drug kit can be administered by the parent, to the child, in the privacy of their home.

The drug test results will be strictly confidential. Parents will not be required to reveal the results to United ISD. The District will offer counseling services through our Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors if so desired; as well as provide parents with a list of local agencies to help deal with their child's problem.

The following behavioral checklist may be used to decide if you should use a student drug testing home kit:

- Change in friends
- Decrease in grades without other explanations
- Change in dress style/hygiene
- Unexplained drastic mood changes
- Unexplained absences from home and/or school
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in eating patterns
- Sibling use of illegal drugs
- History of drug use
- Self mutilating behavior(s)
- Use of alcohol/tobacco
- Involvement in gang activity
- Missing money or possessions

United ISD is offering student drug testing home kits available to parents of middle or high school students. Student drug testing home kits and an On-Demand Testing brochure to include a listing of community resources may be picked up at any middle or high school front office (receptionist-office clerk).

Please call the UISD Director of Guidance and Counseling office at 473-5248 for more information.

## UNIFORMS ARE MANDATORY

Uniforms are mandatory for elementary and middle school students at UISD

Beginning this school year, UISD has adopted standardized dress for all students in grades pre-K through 8th.

If a student attends school in violation of standardized dress, disciplinary steps outlined in the *Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook* will be taken.

The student will be given an opportunity to correct the problem at school.

If the problem is not corrected, the student shall be given in-school suspension

for the remainder of the day until the problem is corrected or until a parent or parental designee brings an acceptable change of clothing to school.

Repeated offenses of the UISD dress code may result in more serious disciplinary action.

School Administrators will have complete and final judgment on all matters concerning interpretation of the student standardized dress.

Matters concerning appearance and dress not specifically covered in FNCA (LOCAL) Policy shall be within the discretion of the administration.



## Wellness Policy Announced:

Currently, more than 35% of Texas children are overweight or obese. As a district, we want to lead our community in the right direction to stop this growing trend. The UISD Board of Trustees has adopted a Local Wellness Policy to begin during the 2006-2007 school year in accordance with federal law. The policy will help to promote healthy lifestyles among students and the district community. At school, your children will be exposed to more key messages about fitness and nu-

trition so that they can make healthy living a priority. The policy will also reinforce the guidelines established by the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy so that your children will continue to experience a healthy school nutrition environment. As parents, you may look forward to reading articles or attending parent-teacher conferences, which will highlight ideas for improving the eating habits and activity level of your families. Remember, wellness should be an important issue for all.

## FREE LUNCH APPLICATION PROCESS:

This year, the Food Service Department will be mailing pre-printed "Free and Reduced Price Meal Applications" to some households. If you receive a Free Lunch Application by mail, you will be asked to go to the campus of your youngest child so that Food Service Staff can assist you in completing your application. The application will have your school children's information already pre-printed. Therefore, the application process will be much simpler and quicker. When you receive the application, you should fill out the rest of the required information at home and bring it in to have it checked. You can also drop it off or send it with your child. Only one application per household will be required.

If your family is new to United ISD, go to the school of your youngest child. The Cafeteria Manager will give you a blank application and will help you complete it. Again, only one application per household will be required.

Some families will not get an application in the mail. These students may have received Direct Certification for free meals. These students should have received a letter from the school advising them that their child does not need to apply. If you did not get an application by mail, check with your cafeteria manager to see if your child(ren) have been approved for free lunch by Direct Certification.

## IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS 2006-2007

**DTaP** - 5 doses unless 4th dose is administered after 4 years of age. Students 7 yrs. or older need 3 doses of any combination. (DTP, Dtap, Dt or Td) and a booster every 10 years.

**MMR** - 2 doses of measles after 1st birthday (one being MMR).

**Polio** - Kinder needs 4 doses with a booster dose after 4 years of age or 3 doses if 3rd dose was administered after 4 years of age. OPV/IPV combination before 4 years of age will satisfy requirement.

**Hep B** - 2006-2007 Kinder to 11th grade need 3 doses (do not count intervals)

**Varicella** - 2006-2007 Kinder to 5th and 7th to 11th grades need one dose after 12 months of age: (2 doses one month apart if vaccine started after 13 years of age).

**Hep A** - Kinder to 3rd grade (2 doses with 1st dose after 2nd birthday). 2006-2007 Pre-K and child care.

**HIB** - 1 dose after 15 months of age for children younger than 5 years old. Incomplete schedule requires 1 dose after 15 months.

**PCV7** - 24 to 59 months old children, need 1 dose after 24 months of age if they have zero (0) doses or an incomplete schedule.



### Standardized Dress Assistance Program

David Hernandez (left) helps a mother with the application for the Standardized Dress Assistance Program at the Student Activity Complex. The District approved some 3,900 vouchers for qualified students. Each student receives one uniform. Applications for the Standardized Dress Assistance Program are still being accepted at the Department of Student Services.

## Standardized Dress Assistance Program 2006-2007 Income Eligibility Guidelines

Family size:	Monthly income:
1	1,062
2	1,430
3	1,799
4	2,167
5	2,535
6	2,904
7	3,272
8	3,640
9	4,009
10	4,378
11	4,747
12	5,116

If you have any questions concerning the assistance program, please contact the Department of Student Services at 473-6249.

UISD Food Services Department WHAT'S NEW FOR 2006-2007

### MEAL PRICES:

Meal prices for school year 2006-2007:

- \$ 1.00 for paid breakfast
- \$ 0.30 for reduced price breakfast
- \$ 1.25 for paid lunch
- \$ 0.40 for reduced price lunch

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## David Garza named to TMF Health Quality Institute board

Laredo physician David Garza, DO, is one of six health care leaders recently elected to the 18-member board of trustees of the TMF Health Quality Institute, formerly Texas Medical Foundation, the Austin-based nonprofit health care consulting company.

"Our role is to help improve the quality of health care for all Texans," said William G. Gamel, MD, CEO of TMF. "Our board members are health care leaders who help us in reaching our goal. We are honored that they're taking time from their busy schedules to give back to the health care community."

TMF board members serve a three-year term. Re-elected board members include Robert H. Emmick, Jr., MD, El Paso; C. Bruce Malone, MD, Austin;

Daniel Saylak, DO, Bryan; and Larry Steiger, FACHE, Austin.

Newly elected board members include Garza and Carla Ortique, MD, Austin.

In addition, Maya Bledsoe, MD, Austin, was elected as vice president, and Susan Strate, MD, Wichita Falls, was elected officer-at-large. Patrick Hanford, DO, Lubbock, serves as president of the board.

TMF Health Quality Institute is focused on promoting quality health and health care through contracts with federal, state, and local governments, as well as private organizations. TMF partners with health care providers in a variety of settings to ensure that every person receives the appropriate care, every time. ♦



Courtesy Photo

### LCC South announces reading club winners

Laredo Community College South recently hosted its Summer Reading Club Challenge, at which 28 children found a creative outlet to expand reading skills at the Zaffirini Library. The three children who read the most books were recognized by staff at the LCC South library. They are first-place winner Hilda Elsa Gonzalez and second-place winners and sisters Adrienne Herrera and Celeste S. Herrera. They are pictured with LCC South Provost Francisco Martinez, Jr., LCC South librarian Analiza Perez-Gomez, and circulation clerk Iris Puentes. Four-year-old Gonzalez read 122 books, while the Herrera sisters, ages three and five, tied with 108 books. The winners received books from B. Dalton Bookstore.

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SEPULVEDA ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS INC.

# BMP radio group takes four top 10 spots in Arbitron ratings

BY MIKE McILVAIN

Look to the radio if you need happy faces in your life where the biggest news is that radio news is coming back to Laredo.

Laredo stations quit airing news programming a few years ago, but Laredo-based BMP vice president and marketing manager Raul Rodriguez says the news will be heard on an undetermined number of his five stations soon.

"It's a future project," he said. "It should be within the next six months."

How the news will be formatted and how it might affect the ratings is anyone's guess, but Arbitron ratings released this month give five-station BMP four top 10 spots, with Guerra Communications' two stations gaining strength in that same upper echelon in the Laredo market. Nineteen stations on both sides of the border "made the book" in the Spring 2006 listings, with BMP's all-Spanish La Ley 100.5 FM leading the pack.

Rodriguez says his stations are not just leading the market, but making it a better place to listen to the radio.

"We made our competitors better," he said.

BMP enjoyed reading the latest ratings from Arbitron in its brand new facilities in Fountain Square off Calle del Norte. Guerra Communications anticipates moving into its new facilities on Jacaman Road before the end of the year from its Calton Road location.

BMP's Hot 106.1 FM, with its bilin-

gual mix of hip hop, reggaeton, and rap, took the No. 2 spot with Guerra's Big Buck Country 98.1 FM taking third. BMP's Digital 107.3, playing international music, scored an 8.0 share of the market for fourth, with Guerra's Z-93 Tejano station and BMP's Old School Jammin' 94.9 FM each tallying 7.2, but the Guerra KJBZ was listed at fifth and Jammin', KQUR, sixth.

Jammin' showed the biggest visible drop in the top 10 since the last ratings from the fall of 2005. KQUR fell from a healthy 12.3 to 7.2.

La Ley took an 18.5 with Hot 106.1 14.1 and Big Buck Country 11.2. La Ley, KBDR-FM, and Hot KNEX-FM posted share gains of 1.8 and 1.4, respectively, but Big Buck jumped 3.3, and that's after changing formats earlier in the year from hip hop, rap, and reggaeton to current country music with a few oldies in for good measure.

BMP's all-automated country station KLNT, 1490-AM, lagged behind its sister stations at No. 13 with a 1.2 share, dropping from 2.0. KLNT is BMP's only fully-automated station. The other four are all or partly manned by 16 to 20 disc jockeys.

BMP station shares totaled 49.0 of polled and estimated Laredo listeners, but Guerra stations general manager Jorge Arredondo was happy with his stations' climbs and wonders what BMP will do with its lighter hitters.

"It will be interesting to see what they do," Arredondo said, taking special note of the 5.1 drop at KQUR.

Rodriguez would like to see more from KLNT, too. He noted that automated AM stations usually don't do

too well in the ratings, but says the station is interesting, carrying the Laredo Bucks hockey games and picking up the World Cup in Spanish this year.

Rodriguez believes more remotes are in store for his stations, but is generally happy with the way things are going at BMP.

"We've invested over \$25 million in this market. We have state of the art equipment and studios," Rodriguez said. "For the community, we employ 50 people, full and part-time, so we are making a contribution in that way and attracting national and regional advertisers here."

Hot 106 program director Arturo "A-Train" Serna has been in his post for some two and a half years and thrives on working for a station which has consistently finished first or second in the market for the last seven years. Serna also works on-air and sees things staying hot where he is. He notes his station attracting mostly males between 18 and 34.

"It pretty much dominates the youth market," he said. "98.1 flipped to Country. They just didn't have the numbers. They weren't that good and we were toe-to-toe."

Serna notes good promotions like a gasoline giveaway boosting 106's visibility in the competitive market.

"A few years ago we gave away \$1 million," he said, smiling.

Arredondo isn't frowning over at Guerra, where he says some of the ratings for KRRG can't be totally considered with the format change to country.

Arredondo pointed to Arbitron's Demographic Breakout, which had the old Mix 98.1 taking a 21.1 percent of the 12-17 audience. Arredondo expects that age bracket holding to be cut in half, but sees growth in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups who have more disposable income, allowing them to buy from Big Buck Country advertisers, if not advertising their own businesses. Not too many between 12 and 17 have much money to spend.

Arredondo is also optimistic about listenership rising in the middle income bracket and expects to see more listeners with college degrees regularly tuning in to George Strait, Toby Keith, Tim McGraw, Faith Hill, and other country singers on 98.1. He also sees 98.1 and Z-93 in the current top 5 for adults 25-54 and 18-49, respectively.

Arredondo and other Guerra Communications workers continue to hear their Big Buck Country aired in many businesses around town.

"I called Parks and Recreation the other day. They put me on hold and their holding system is Big Buck," he said, laughing.

Media ratings are always a subject of major study when released but they lack some return -- as all polls do. Rodriguez says that media ratings aren't perfect because, oddly, some people don't turn in their diaries to the polling companies, despite receiving money for doing so.

Learn more online about Arbitron and radio ratings at [www.arbitron.com](http://www.arbitron.com).◆

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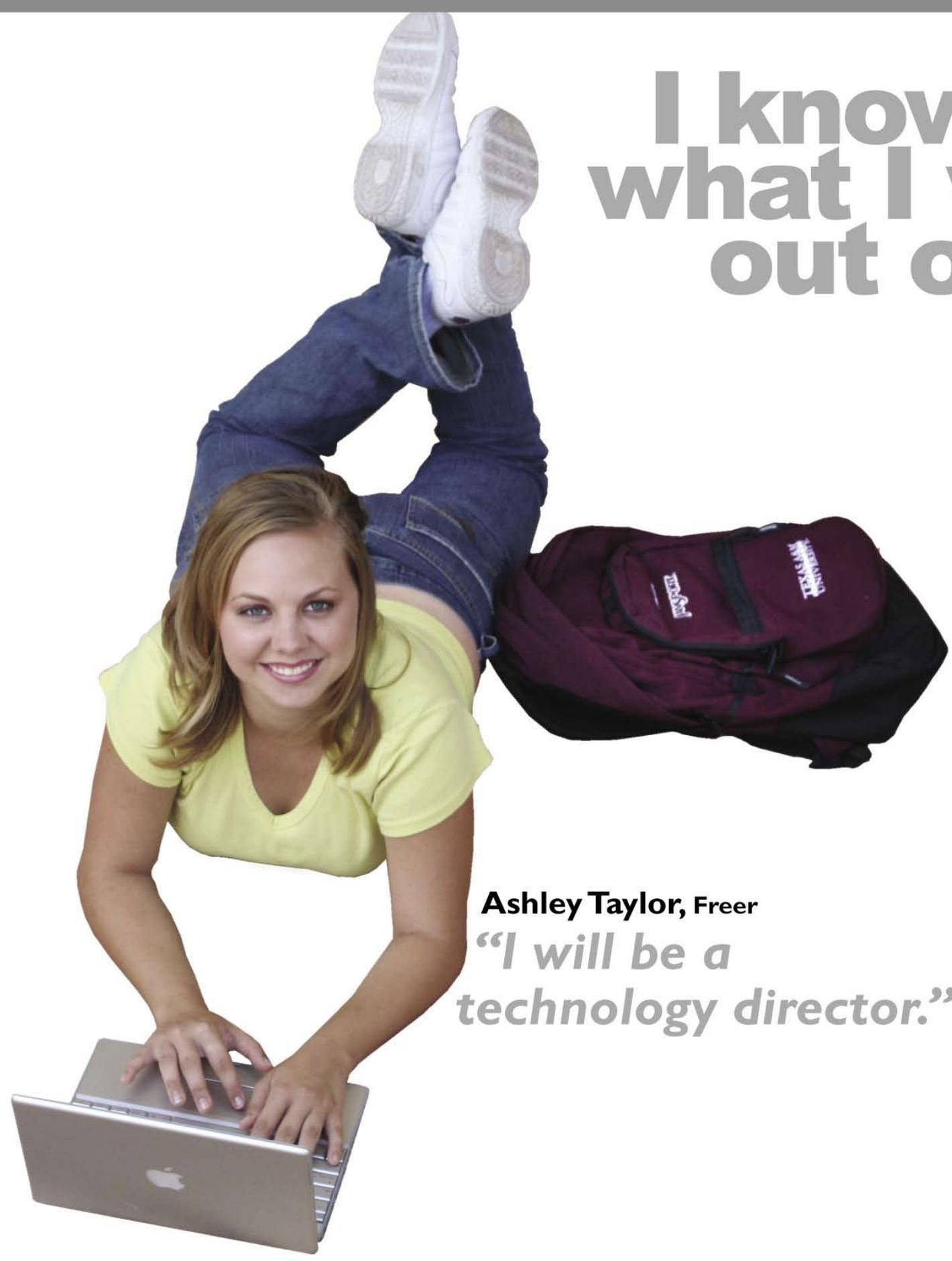
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# BP-bound local comedian Ponchi Herrera honored with send-off

BY MIKE MCILVAIN

Ponchi Herrera's standup comedy talent has gone west and green with his joining the Border Patrol last month.

Speculation has it that Herrera was actually recruited by The Migra as a special weapon in the U.S. Homeland Security effort to secure the Mexican border. It is believed that Herrera will stand at the top of seemingly empty canyons and arroyos, except for the usual jackrabbits and rattlesnakes, and crack jokes in Spanish.

First a muffled laugh will be followed by pockets of laughter, which Herrera's fellow BP officers will flash large spotlights on before taking the wannabe immigrants into custody.

Herrera would neither confirm nor deny the possible role in the green-clad

service's mission on the border.

He expects to be based in El Paso, but hopes to be transferred to Laredo when possible in a few years.

Herrera is changing into a uniform from his usual street clothes, but not totally planning a halt to his comic career, hoping to perform at clubs in El Paso and within driving distance when time allows.

Working for the government will force him to be more conservative in his material choices, but he said he believes he can do it.

Some 50 people attended a going away party for Herrera at Average Joe's last month at which a few friends roasted the well-traveled comic. The crowd enjoyed a slide show from Ponchi's performances and social gatherings.

Local band Little Sister played for the crowd to close the event. ♦

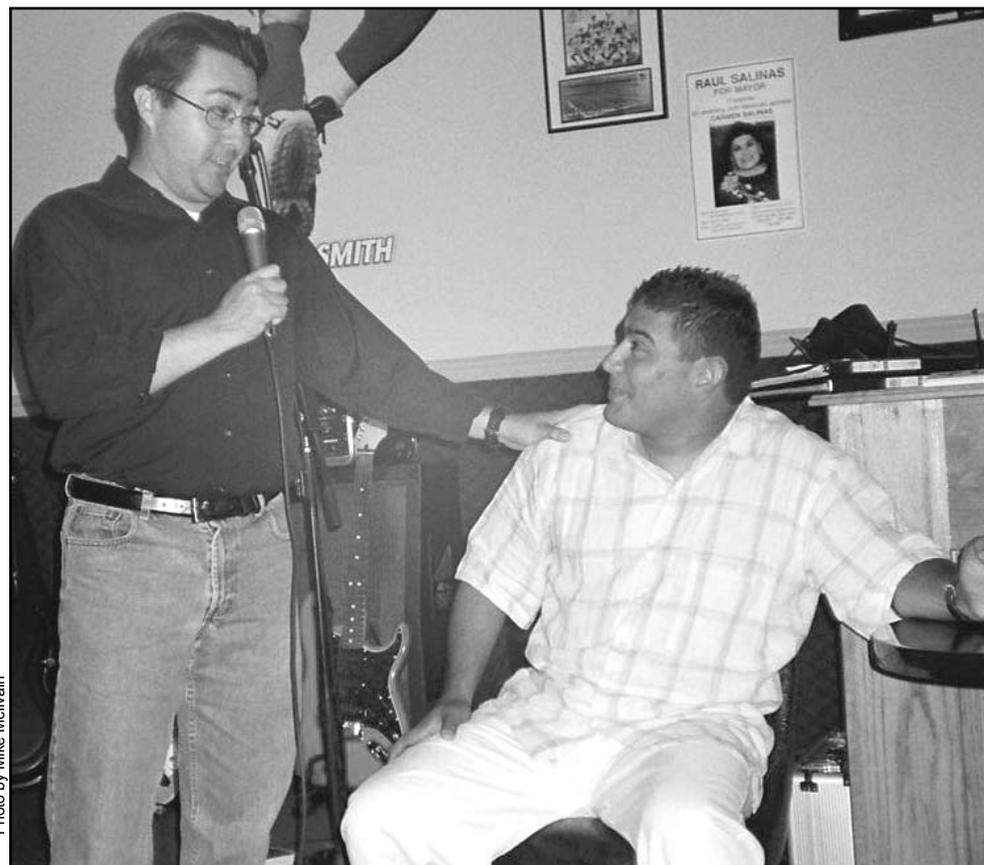


Photo by Mike McIlvain

### Roasting Ponchi

Mando Treviño tells a joke about Ponchi after Jaime Fuentes had his turn in the roast.



### Local comedian Ponchi Herrera

Ponchi Herrera takes the microphone to thank those who attended a going away party for him.



Photos by Mike McIlvain

### Ponchi and Roxanne

Close friend Roxanne Garza smiles for the camera with Ponchi.



Photo by Rolando Tijerina

**Paul Young Groundbreaking**

At the Paul Young Auto Group groundbreaking for its Dodge-Chrysler Jeep dealership at 1102 Bob Bullock Loop were IBC's Enrique Morales, and Willie Martinez, Dana Tucker of Chrysler Financial, Paul Young Auto Group chairman and president Paul Young, Jr., Paul Young Dodge-Chrysler Jeep general manager Shawn D. Young, and Darrick Todd of Daimler-Chrysler. The state of the art facility is expected to be completed in 10 months and will have showrooms for each of the three brands.

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# CompUSA in SA -- professional troubleshooting and repair; arguing the definition of an out-of-town check with Super S in Zapata

BY  
THE  
MYSTERY  
CUSTOMER



to the compost pile or the chicken house floor. I'm talking about a check cashing policy for "out of town checks." The MC's check, which bore an address in Laredo, was drawn on a Zapata bank across the street from the Super S, the big bank on Hwy. 83. Even so, an assistant manager and two clerks deemed the check an "out of town" instrument.

The **Café Candela's machacado con huevo** was an excellent choice for breakfast. Their homemade hamburgers are also a great hit for lunch. Management has decorated the interior of the restaurant with photographs of various adventures around the Candela, Coahuila area, which combined with a very attentive staff, provide an enjoyable dining atmosphere. The complimentary homemade *postre* at the end of every meal is also a nice touch for those of us who have a sweet tooth. This establishment is highly recommended for service, ambience, and very affordable prices.

At **Michael's** framing department, the MC had the pleasure of working with two extremely pleasant and knowledgeable individuals. One was Roque Montemayor and the other was Lourdes Gutierrez, both very good at what they do. Mr. Montemayor was kind enough to replace a broken glass at no charge and Ms. Gutierrez provided excellent suggestions for mats and frames.

At **Home Depot**, Sandra Martinez was very helpful in the purchase of a new refrigerator. Home Depot will call you half an hour in advance before delivery instead of giving you a long, open window for when delivery might be possible.

And at **Lowe's**, if you ask, you will find a person who knows just how window hardware works, really any kind of hardware.

At **B. Dalton**, the MC found the same dependable service with folks who make the effort to find your desired purchase, whether it is in stock or needs to be ordered.

Truly rude was an assistant manager at **Fuddrucker's** who looked to be a graduate of the school of dis-

dain. He wasn't nice to the MC or to his co-workers. The MC has always found good service at this family establishment, and that is why this fellow's demeanor seemed out of the norm. Perhaps he was having a bad day. The ear-drum piercing PA system could use a calibration.

Many thanks to Catholic Cemetery volunteer **Rogelio Laurel**, a

very pleasant gentleman, who assisted the MC with a hose. A retiree who helps out at the cemetery, Mr. Laurel was once an umpire for the American Little League.

Great service from **Jorge Martinez Auto South** on a set of Toyota tires and getting a ding out of the MC's most comfortable commuting auto. ♦

**K**nowledgeable, professional troubleshooting and diagnoses, timely and courteous service for a computer dilemma is what the MC found at **CompUSA in San Antonio** (Rector Drive at US Hwy. 281). Tech Troy Holland kept the MC's laptop 24 hours, cleaned it, backed it up, and returned it in excellent form. It's an excellent store, by the way, aimed at the latest technology to make work easier for those dependent on computers.

What a wonderful discovery the **Havana Hotel in San Anto** turned out to be. It's on the quiet end of the Riverwalk, an area frequented by serious walkers and birdwatchers. *The New York Times* called it "San Antonio's most bohemian boutique hotel." The old Mediterranean Revival hotel was built in 1914 and features wooden floors, high ceilings, enormous windows, and great natural lighting, and a shabby chic that's just right. The MC enjoyed a delightful stay there and a Sunday morning on the hotel's porch watching hummingbirds flit through the hibiscus. If you have time, take in an evening at the Havana's tapas grill, Club Cohiba, which offers cocktails, wine, and cigars. The hotel faces Navarro Street.

At **Whole Foods Market**, also in SA, where the MC has usually found excellent service at the vitamins and supplements part of the store, the MC encountered instead some really disinterested individuals.

Never a favorite place to shop, **Super S in Zapata** confirmed once again for the MC that the store's policies are formed by careless minds. No, I'm not talking about expired cilantro and tomatoes that should have found their way

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# GATEWAY MAKES A MOVE

BY ROLANDO DAVID TIJERINA

Over the last 43 years through-out a series of changes as to location, scope of services, funding, and staffing, Gateway Community Health Center (GCHC) has never strayed from its stated mission to provide high quality medical, mental, and dental care and to promote health and disease management services in a professional, personal, and cost effective manner.

The August inauguration of Gateway's newest, 64,000 square foot, state of the art facility at 1515 Pappas Street is yet another move forward to bring health care to those who most need it in Laredo and Webb County.

"The opening of our new main clinic is a dream come true. A few short years ago, we were struggling to survive, and now we will be moving into a state-of-the-art main clinic that will replace the center's previous main location at 2309 Saunders Street," said Miguel Treviño, CEO of GCHC.

Gateway had its beginnings as the Migrant Health Center in 1963 as part of the City of Laredo Health Department. It reorganized as an independent non-profit in 1989 and moved to a larger facility in 1995 at 2309 Saunders to meet ever-increasing demands for health care. The clinic also operates a second location at 2007 South Zapata Highway.

After monitoring data from the U.S. Census Bureau, birth rates, and new housing and business starts, Gateway administrators decided that the time was right for the clinic to expand to better serve the ever-growing needs of the community and to address those needs with the

Pappas Street facility. Estimates of 80,000 uninsured residents in Webb County were another catalyst for the aggressive push to construct the new three-story Main Clinic.

A centralized location for the new Gateway clinic was chosen near the Laredo medical complex comprised of the Laredo Medical Center, Laredo Specialty Hospital, and the UT Health Science Center San Antonio Laredo Campus Extension.

Early projections by Gateway foresee the clinic's service capacity in primary and specialty care to increase by 50%. Services available include internal and family practice medicine, pediatrics, pre-natal and post-partum care, family planning education services, breast and cervical care services, podiatry care, special care services for diabetes patients including self-monitoring supplies, eye exams and special retina care and surgeries. Dependent upon funding availability, community glaucoma screenings, on-site pharmacy services, and laboratory services will also be provided.

Gateway will continue providing after hours minor emergency care at the new clinic Monday through

Friday, from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Primary dental and specialty dental care services will also be available, including general dentistry and dental hygiene with an emphasis on children. The new dental unit at the Main Center will also provide an expanded scope of dental care that includes periodontic and prosthodontic care, and dental services to more adults, including expectant mothers and diabetes patients. These specialty dental care services will be provided in conjunction with and through special funding received from the Dental Branch of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Gateway will continue the provision of maxillofacial services at its new dental clinic. The Center will have the capacity to expand its dental care services by a minimum of 50%.

Gateway will also provide primary mental health care, though limited by the availability of funding and providers. Gateway will continue its close collaboration with the Border Regional Community Mental Health/Mental Retardation Center to provide primary mental health care

services.

Enabling services include chronic disease patient self-management services and a number of other preventive and health promotional programs. Gateway, which has recently acquired grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Pfizer Health Solutions, Inc., will significantly expand upon its experience and expertise with chronic disease patient self-management services, in which it has become a national leader, and recently, trainer for other primary care centers.

The clinic, staffed by over 150 dedicated individuals, also provides diabetes self-management courses, where clients learn about the disease, and how to control it; diabetes support groups, low cost diabetic supplies, and eye screening programs. Gateway is a participant in LADO a LADO, a state funded, community based program that promotes the prevention of diabetes and complications of the disease.

For more information about the services provided by Gateway's Main Clinic call 956-795-8100.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►►



ditional providers and support staff will be employed with the recent relocation of the clinic to our new 64,000 sq. ft. facility. The completion of the new clinic and the recruitment of the providers is a paramount accomplishment for Gateway.”

“Our new practitioners are highly trained and will continue the tradition of providing very high quality health care at Gateway,” said Treviño.◆

Seven medical professionals have joined the Gateway staff. They are Abha Gyani, MD; Angelica Flores, MD; Marie Christina Gonzalez, RN, FNP; Jovannelly Zaragoza, DDS; Lorena Salcedo, DDS; Ana Reyes Retana, DDS; and Erika Zarate, DDS. According to Gateway CEO Miguel Treviño, “The addition is only a beginning since ad-



**Abha Gyani, MD, obtained her medical degree in 2002 from the Finch University of Health Sciences in North Chicago, Illinois. Following her graduation, Dr. Gyani completed a residency in internal medicine at the Medical Branch of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Harlingen. Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Dr. Gyani has a special interest in diabetes and metabolic syndromes. She recently completed a research project on diabetes and dyslipidemias that was published in the June 2006 issue of the American Diabetes Association Supplement.**



**Jovannelly Zaragoza, DDS, obtained her doctorate in general dentistry from the Dental Branch of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in May 2005. A general dentist, Dr. Zaragoza joined Gateway in February 2006 and has served a large number of area patients. Dr. Zaragoza received her BA degree from TAMU in 2000 and is a graduate of United South High School.**



**Erika Zarate, DDS, earned a Doctorate in Dentistry from the Dental Branch of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in 2006. A native Laredoan, Dr. Zarate received her BS degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio and is a graduate of United High School.**



**Marie Cristina Gonzalez, a Registered Nurse and a Family Nurse Practitioner, joined Gateway in July. Gonzalez received her Associate Degree in Nursing from LCC and her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Texas A&M International University. She graduated with very high honors from both programs. Gonzalez continued her advanced nursing studies at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi where she obtained a Masters of Science in Nursing and received her certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner in the state of Texas. She is also a certified diabetes educator and has accumulated hours of research and work at the Laredo Medical Center.**



**Ana Reyes Retana, DDS, received a Doctorate in Dentistry in 2006 from the Dental Branch of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. A native of Laredo, Dr. Retana received her BS degree from St. Mary's University in San Antonio and is a graduate of St. Augustine High School.**



**Lorena Salcedo, DDS, will be returning to Gateway to practice pediatric dentistry. She recently completed her specialty training in pediatric dentistry at the University of California's Dental School at Loma Linda. Prior to receiving her advanced dental degree in pediatric dentistry, Dr. Salcedo served as a general dentist at Gateway's South Clinic from July 2002 to June 2004.**



**Angelica Flores, MD, a graduate of the Baylor College of Medicine, completed a residency program in internal medicine at the Cabrini Medical Center in New York City, where she was the Chief Resident for one year. Prior to re-joining Gateway, Dr. Flores held administrative and quality of care positions at the then Mercy Hospital and Laredo Medical Group, where she also was a practicing clinician in internal medicine. Dr. Flores is a graduate of Martin High School.**

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#### **Summer in Hong Kong**

Samantha García, a native of Beeville and an international business major at Texas A&M International University, traveled to Hong Kong this summer and attended intensive Mandarin Chinese language and culture courses. These courses are in addition to the Mandarin courses that she took at TAMIU's International Language Institute, which sponsored her trip to China.

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## Extreme adventures at the Continental Ranch

Extreme Touchstone Adventures is an experienced rock climbing and rappelling outfit. The group uses the Continental Ranch in West Texas as its training center for beginner, intermediate, and advanced climbers. Just outside of Del Río, the ranch is crisscrossed by 17 miles of the serene Pecos River.

Impressive cliffs overlook the emerald waterway and make excellent proving grounds for the rock climbing and rappelling courses guided by Valentín Moreno.

The ex-US Army Ranger has over 20 years of experience in the sport and has climbed in Denali Park and Alaska Ranges, including Mt. McKinley's

7,000 ft. Kalkeetna Glacier.

The physical and mental challenges posed by rock climbing have not deterred novices; Moreno boasts an increasing popularity in the sport. Climbers hailing from San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and Houston have made the trip to the Continental Ranch to witness firsthand the beau-

tiful terrain that surrounds the Pecos.

Climbers can choose to make Seminole Canyon State Park, a short drive from the ranch, their temporary residency during the course. The park showcases pictographs that are more than 7,000 years old. These pictographs give historians and anthropologists a glimpse of the people that once inhabited West Texas. Campsite amenities at the park include electrical and water connections.

The outfit operates on a seasonal basis and spots fill up quickly. Courses start in February and culminate in September.

ETA initiates courses at a beginner level with instruction in basic rappelling skills. The introductory classes span three and a half days and are composed of fundamental skills partnered with incremental climbing. Touchstone also offers intermediate and advanced classes for climbers seeking more than the basics. The richness and splendor that is the Lower Pecos River landscape is an experience comparable to none.





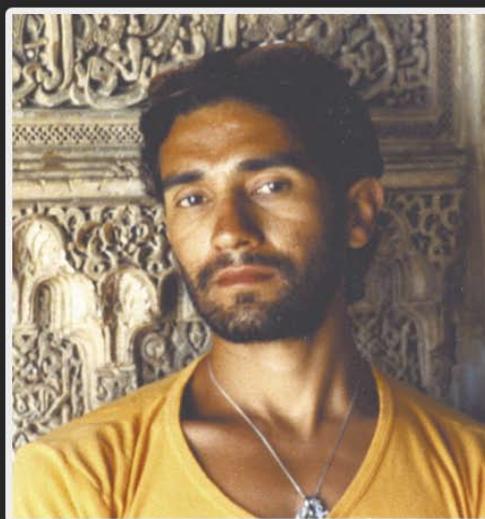
**Manuel Cavazos appointed to Texas Credit Union Commission**

Attorney Manuel Cavazos (right), a former Laredoan, has been appointed by Gov. Rick Perry to the Texas Credit Union Commission which regulates all credit unions organized and chartered in Texas. Cavazos is also a CPA and corporate counsel to TexCom. He is the son of the late Manuel Vela Cavazos and Anita Reyna Cavazos and the grandson of Zapata County rancher Serapio Vela. He is pictured with his brother, Laredo attorney Ernesto Cavazos.

Courtesy Photo

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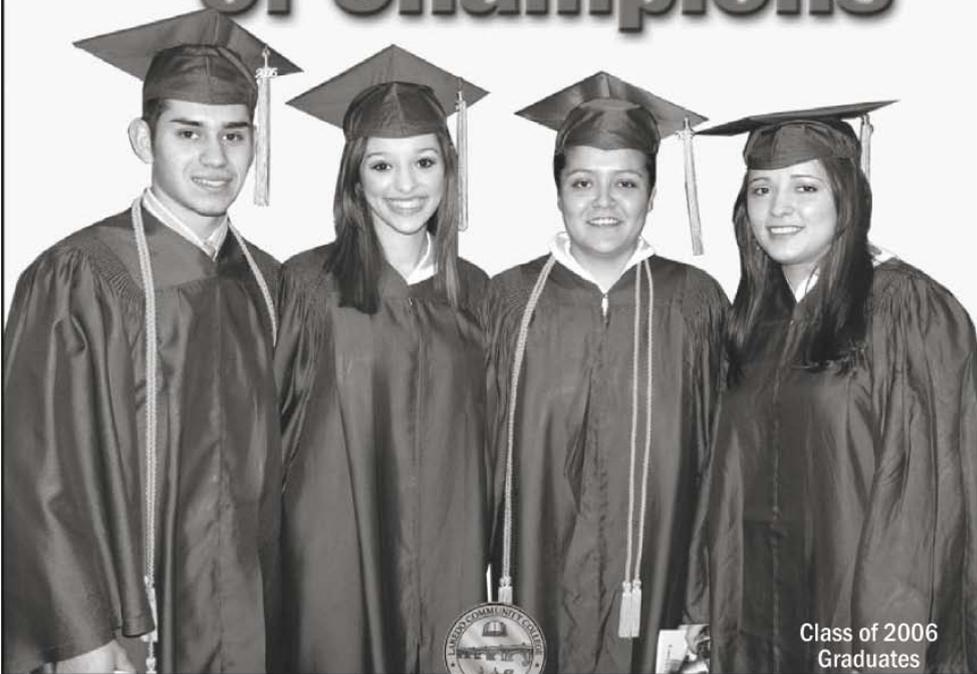
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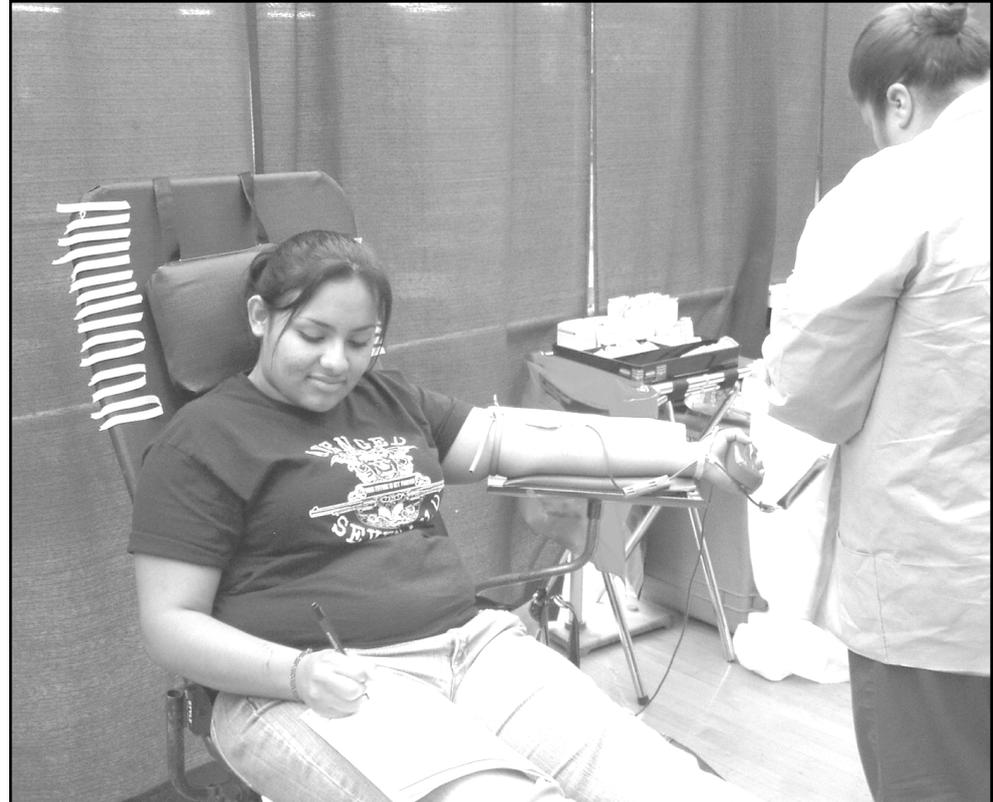
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### Scholarships help 105 students pursue higher education

LULAC Council 7 and Council 624 in partnership with Communities in Schools presented over \$60,000 in scholarships to 105 area students at a ceremony at the Laredo National Bank. For the last 10 years LULAC has worked to help area kids achieve the goal of attending college. Keynote speaker Dr. Daniel García, LISD superintendent of schools, spoke to students about the importance of hard work and dedication in all their endeavors. Through the help of an aunt, García, an experienced mechanic, was able to attend the University of Texas, though a counselor advised him that he would never make it.

Photos by Rolando Tijerina



### LCC holds blood drive

The South Texas Blood and Tissue Center in cooperation with Laredo Community College Health Services hosted a blood drive at the college's Kazen Center. Estimates by STBTC predict that one out of every 20 Texans will need a blood donation in their lifetime. However, only five percent of the eligible donor population actually donates. Martha Ortiz, an incoming freshman at LCC, took time from her schedule to assist a South Texas cause.



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# Santa María film festival picks a couple of duds and some really good movies on DVD

BY MARÍA EUGENIA GUERRA

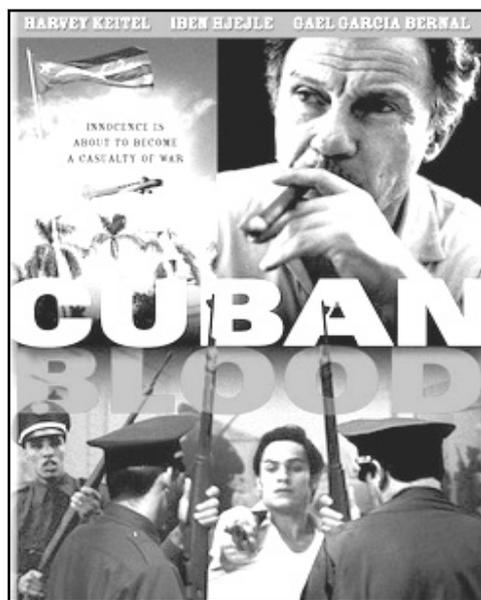
A conscious decision to rest, to make wastrel time before the TV screen began with a stop at Hollywood Video in South Laredo -- and may I say thank goodness for Hollywood Video in South Laredo, overlooking the service that often lacks in attentiveness as the fellow in charge when I have been there is wont to have personal telephone conversations before serving those waiting in line to pay good American dollars for the store's products?

I digress. The weekend's offerings included *Tristram Shandy*, *Rumor Has It*, *Duane Hopwood*, *Cuban Blood*, *The Sisters*, *dot the i*, *Last Holiday*, and *Prime*. Follow my lead. I wasn't very attentive making my selections. Don't bother with *Tristram Shandy* -- who was he anyhow? -- or with *Rumor Has it* and *Duane Hopwood*. The best part of *Rumor Has It* was watching Shirley McLaine revive the same irascible, hard-as-ten penny nails, do-not-call-me-grandma Aurora Greenway character she played in Larry McMurtry's *Terms of Endearment*, and the next best part was watching Mark Ruffalo give an A performance in an otherwise B romantic comedy.

Though the DVD jacket called David Schwimmer's performance in *Duane Hopwood* "a career transforming performance," I don't think it was. As with Jennifer Aniston's lead in *Rumor Has It*, it is difficult to grant Schwimmer credibility beyond the sound bites of the *Friends* character he so deftly portrayed for a decade. *Duane Hopwood* is the story of an alcoholic who predictably by movie's end will have lost his family and his job. Best character in the movie -- Dick Cavett's fretting gay man. Flattest performance -- Janeane Garofalo.

In *dot the i*, the devil's in the details in this tiresome movie inside a movie, a tiresome movie inside a movie. A fan of Gael García Bernal, I picked it up in hopes he would deliver as awesome a performance as he did in the Spanish satire *Don't Tempt Me*, the film in which he plays the devil to Fanny Ardant's God.

Harvey Keitel is excellent in any movie, and he was just that in *Cuban Blood* (also released as *Dreaming of Julia* and *Cuba Libre*), one of the best narratives I've



ever watched about Cuba on the eve of the overthrow of Fulgencio Batista. Most movies of that genre parade a handful of automobiles from the mid to late 50s to help you *pesca la onda*. This film does an excellent job of setting a believable background for the town of Holguín, but more than anything, the film allows a glimpse of some fine performances -- Keitel (Che) as the bow-tied foremost citizen of Holguín and patriarch of a large family, Diana Bracho's achingly beautiful portrayal as Keitel's wife Beta, Iben Hjejle as the only American in the town, and that of the boy narrator Andhy Méndez. Gabriel García Bernal makes a cameo as Ricky the revolutionary.

*Prime* was another favorite in the Hol-



lywood Video bag, a fast paced May-September romance starring Uma Thurman (September) and her young lover Bryan Greenberg (May). Meryl Streep is wonderful as the jittery therapist -- shrink of Thurman's character, mother of Greenberg's. You can guess the ensuing drama as Streep wrestles with how to tell both of her ethical dilemma as Thurman confides to her that she has fallen in love with a much younger man. What you can't guess is the ending. This film had a smart, incisive quality to it. Streep was, as she always is, excellent as she takes on for her role the dubious attributes of frump and gauche. In case you didn't know, 37 and 23, the respective ages of the protagonists, are prime numbers.

Another good pick was *The Sisters*,



which is based on Anton Chekhov's short story and the play *The Three Sisters*. An idealized childhood preserved in family lore for the youngest of three sisters (the baby) unravels quickly, and well, in this riveting drama about a dysfunctional family trying to wear an ill-fitting cloak of normalcy. Set for the most part in the civility of academia, the drama is rooted in an elegantly appointed faculty lounge of the university of which Mary Stuart Masterson's character Olga (the oldest one) is chancellor. Scathing sisterly antagonism and vitriol have no finer moment than in Maria Bello's portrayal of Marcia (the pretty one). It is the vibrancy of the language of the exchanges

between the characters -- who include Eric McCormack's Gary, Rip Torn's Dr. Chebrin, and Tony Goldwyn's Vincent -- that moves the drama from the sedate setting of the wainscoted faculty lounge to moments of brilliance, fire, pain, torment, destruction, transformation, and conciliation. This very powerful writing is a credit to the skills of Richard Alfeiri, who wrote the play and screenplay in masterful strokes of all the juxtapositions you can construct for emotions and the substance of moral character, dichotomies that scream that the perfect sister is not so very perfect, that the innocent one is not quite so innocent, and that the harsh one that says she needs no one and nothing is the most in need. Riveting writing, riveting performances by Bello (*A History of Violence*, *The Cooler*); stage, film, and TV actress Masterson (*Nine: The Musical*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Law & Order*); McCormack (*Will & Grace*); and Tony Goldwyn (*American Gun*, *Without A Trace*, *the L Word*.)

To the weighted drama of *The Sisters*, there is no finer antidote than the uplifting though hardly credible *Last Holiday* starring Queen Latifah, LL Cool J, Timothy Hutton, and Gerard Depardieu. What a great feel-good movie, so sweet and funny a film about possibilities. Latifah's dialogues with God are priceless. You'll love this movie. Depardieu is lovely and sentimental.♦



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# READ THIS BOOK! (TO YOUR GRANDCHILD)

*Ranch.*  
By Roxie Munro.  
Albany, Texas: Bright Sky Press.  
2004. 32 pages.

BY MARÍA EUGENIA GUERRA

What a delightful book I have found to read to my granddaughter Emily. It's called *Ranch*, and it's written by Roxie Munro, an artist who is Texan by birth but who lives in New York. On meticulously and richly illustrated double page spreads, the book takes on different aspects of ranch work by naming the place where the work takes place -- range, pens and corrals, chuckwagon, creek, barn yard, shed, aerial overview, and office -- and also names the work -- roundup, branding, training.

Munro's exquisite drawings call for a lot of naming and counting exercises of domestic and wild animals that include livestock,

horned toads, roadrunners, wild turkeys, ducks, beavers, box turtles, and mockingbirds.

Munro's attention to detail, no doubt the fruit of much research, brings the cowboys and their quarter horses to life, as does the text that inventories the names of accoutrement gear, tools, trailers, and vehicles.

What Emily sees in Munro's book is not too different from what children see on their own family ranches. I especially

love the aerial drawing, which is not unlike the aerial photo that hangs on my office wall.

This book is a treasure.

Munro has written and illustrated for children

*The Inside-Outside Book*

of New York City, a New York

*Times* "Best Illustrated Book," with others in her *Inside-Outside* series: *Washington D.C.*; *Libraries*; and *Texas*. Also by Roxie Munro for Bright Sky Press: *Learn Chess Fast*.◆



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# UHS Longhorn Band eyes State prize

BY CRISTINA GRANADOS

When it comes to summer vacation the last place high school students want to be is on a parking lot under the scorching sun, but when the opportunity presents itself to advance to state band competition, sacrifices must be made. With the guidance of drum major Guillermo Rivera and assistant drum majors Cindy García and Roland Lopez, the United High School (UHS) band has been rehearsing its new number, "Scheherezade," for upcoming competitions and events this school year.

What separates one band from another is how much time, dedication, and muscle members and their directors put into practices. With each performance the band not only wants

to prove its musical worth, but also strives to show how far it has progressed. Throughout the years, UHS band director John Mallon has been pushing band members to become the best musicians



and team members they can be. Brass instructor Abel Vergara and woodwind instructor José Castro help with marching techniques and endurance exercises. This year the practices have become more intense than previous years, and the UHS band members have shown their determination by attending this summer session. "The kids have been working very hard to prepare for the best possible show and to get the best product out there," Mallon said. The UHS Band has a goal in mind -- to be the best band in Laredo and Texas.

"Countless hours go in to finish what they started and to provide the crowd with the best show possible," said Oscar Rodriguez, an ex-UHS

band member. The band has been preparing since May for this year's UISD and LISD band festivals, UIL, Bands of America (BOA), and the U.S. Scholastic Band Association (USSBA).

The drumline attended camp June 17 through 21 and continued to practice with the rest of the band July 31 through August 11. Several drum technicians visited during the camp to teach the students different techniques, breakdowns, and styles that are performed in Drum Corps International (DCI). UHS drumline instructor Rick Ríos strives to make the drumline as good as DCI. In the past, the UHS drumline has received several awards for their performances, ranking top ten at the Lone Star Indoor Drumline competition, and receiving the best drumline award at the USSBA competition, UISD festival, and for four consecutive years in the LISD festival. This year the drumline will be attending Winter Corps and Lone Star competition.

"One band, one sound" has proven to be a major

catch phrase for this band. Members of the UHS band have learned to work together to achieve their goals. UHS band member Jeffrey Dorrycott said, "Personally, I've never been really exceptionally good at anything, but being in band has given me a sense of accomplishment. So I know that I haven't just spent my teenage years popping pimples and sleeping in class like everyone else. As cheesy as it sounds, it gives me something to be proud of, something to have pride in. I'm still far from being a virtuoso at my instrument, but it doesn't feel that way." As for other band members, like Dorrycott, band has become more than just a school organization. It has become a way of life.◆



## VFWLA installs new officers

VFW Post 9194 Ladies Auxiliaries held their installation of officers at Sirloin Stockade recently. Pictured from left are Edna Garza, Hermelinda Arnold, Margie Rodriguez, Concepción Sanchez, Blanca Nava, Placida Barrera, Margarita Flores, Catalina Reyna, Thelma Flores, María Eliza Reyna, and Esther Flores.

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# An annotated photo album: *The Picture History of East Webb County Towns, Oil Fields and Camps* by William A. Layton

BY TONI HOWELL

*The Picture History of East Webb County Towns, Oil Fields and Camps* by William A. Layton reminds me of a lovingly annotated photograph album that focuses on the Texas oil and gas boom in Webb and surrounding counties during the 1920s and 1930s. Layton put his heart and soul into this creation and I'm convinced that it's this heart and soul -- Layton's painstaking efforts to acknowledge each contributor's help, his reverent retelling of personal narratives, his cataloging of everything from oil and gas fields to pastors in Bruni, his retelling of stories like the one about a dead man found by the railroad tracks, and his judicious inclusion of maps and diagrams as well as photos -- that make this a unique and very important book. Layton's book should be available at every library in Webb and its adjacent counties; it would be a welcome addition to every library in Texas; and I'd go so far as to say that Layton's *Picture History of East Webb County* is a must-read for most folks in Bruni, Oilton, Mirando City, and Aguilares since the development of each town is highlighted here. Naturally, those living in Laredo will profit from this study, as well. Yes, indeed, read this book to relive the good old Texas Oil Boom days when everyone who was anyone knew the difference between a straight line cable rig, a standard rotary tool rig, and a spudder rig; a mudder, a gusher, and a gasser; roughnecks, wildcatters, and drillers.

The book opens with key information about land grants in South Texas that provide the land that would become the towns we now call Bruni, Oilton, and Mirando City as well as basic information about the Texas-Mexican Railway Company which transported workers, machinery, unrefined crude oil, and livestock to and from the oil fields in and around those towns.

Approximately 70 pages are devoted to the careful discussion of Bruni's growth and development, with 20 of

those pages a tribute taken from the 1946 edition of the Bruni High School Yearbook to the men from Bruni who served in America's Armed Forces during World War II. Including the World War II generation in *The Picture History* takes readers beyond the announced scope of the work, and this layering of information, this going beyond the 1920s and 1930s, happens time and again. Although Layton's discussion always centers on the oil and gas boom years, it's as though he just can't help himself -- he must include a little more key information about each of the oil and gas towns. And sometimes that additional information comes from the decades following the 1920s and 1930s.

In the Bruni section of *The Picture History* (and in every section of the book), poignant tales bring pathos to the benign and silent black and white photos. After viewing several photos of Lonnie Peal, readers hear the story of Lonnie's death. The young man died after being gored by "an old brown steer" on the Peal Ranch, which was located about 20 miles from Bruni. Although a ranch hand hustled to Bruni to ensure Lonnie's transport on the Tex-Mex Railroad line to Laredo for medical attention, the boy died. Stories like this one leave readers feeling lucky to be living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and saddened, too, for Lonnie. Had cell phones, helicopters, and e-mail been available in 1918, Lonnie need not have suffered the three-hour delay between time of injury and transfer to the "waiting boxcar" in Bruni, nor the fruitless 90-minute trip by rail to Laredo.

And if the narratives in the Bruni section stick with you, so, too, do many of the stark comments about Bruni:

"He [a prominent, new resident from East Texas] proposed a new school be built for the Mexican-American students to attend separately from Anglo students who attended Bruni School. Fortunately, the Webb Common School funds were quite low at that time and the new segregated school was never built."

True, Layton editorializes here, but this is an annotated photo album assembled by a man who grew up in the region he now commemorates; therefore, the comments sometimes reflect the opinions of its creator.

Brief discussions of Torrecillas, a ranch community that sprang up along the Texas-Mexican Railway Company line; Oilton; Mirando City; and Aguilares, another ranching community, follow the extensive examination of Bruni. In addition, Layton's book considers railroad settlements of Ochoa, Pescadito, and Villegas; the small ranch settlements of La Tinajas, Los Angeles, and San Pablo; as well as the settlements of Moglia, Billings, Welhousen, DeSpain, and Laurel.

Short biographies of successful oil men, ranchers, and business men are followed by an impressive list of oil and gas fields that become the subject of discussion in the second half of *The Picture History*. Naturally, it would have been an impossible task for Layton to collect and record the name of every worker who worked these fields, but he doesn't forget to remind readers of their presence and their importance. At the end of his 24-item list of oil and gas fields, Layton adds a simple but touching acknowledgement: "The Men Who Worked These Fields. . . ." In this section, of course, readers take a look at oil and gas production not only in East Webb County, but Duval and Zapata counties as well.

In this section, too, Layton includes personal narratives like the tale from Mills Bennett Camp, a story from Layton's own childhood. Apparently, a Mr. Williams explains his missing finger to young Layton by claiming, "a rat ate it off one night. . . ." Layton's father tells his son the real story: "The truth was Mr. Williams lost his finger in a rod line coupling accident while hooking up a pump jack for oil production." At about 90 pages in length and with maps galore, the oil and gas field section of Layton's book is the longest.

Towards the end of his work, Layton

includes a chapter called "Oil Drilling and Producing." Diagrams, photos, and maps help readers better understand the business of drilling for and then transporting crude oil from the Webb County area to Corpus Christi.

Some of my favorite snapshots are those reproduced in Layton's final chapter, "Pictures of Other People and Places in Texas": an oil field fire in Burkburnett in 1918, a flooded Main Street in Freer in 1932, and a snow-covered Bruni in 1940.

Lists and appendices conclude *The Picture History*. Lists that record Justices of the Peace in East Webb County, population counts from 1860-1920, and Webb County Judges from 1847-1996 are helpful, but the appendices that catalogue the names of those interred in both Los Ojuelos Cemetery and Mirando City Cemetery are unexpected gems.

As you enjoy Bill Layton's *The Picture History of East Webb County Towns, Oil Fields & Camps*, mark the places that make you linger longest and then compare notes with friends and family. Chances are, lively discussion and a whole flood of memories will ensue. Although this book contains minor inconsistencies with spelling and punctuation, these become part and parcel of the book's charm. For me, it reads like an annotated photograph album that records in writing a host of honest, engaging, and often heartbreaking oral tales from deep South Texas.

To order your copy of *The Picture History of East Webb County Towns, Oil Fields and Camps*, contact Layton by phone at (325) 646-2668, or by ground mail at 102 Allen Dr. in Early, Texas 76802. (Please print "Attention: Photo Book" on the envelope addressed to the Allen address.) You may also e-mail Layton at billlayton\_50@yahoo.com. The total cost of \$32 includes shipping and handling.♦

Toni Howell is an English instructor at Laredo Community College.

# Josephine Brand honored on 97<sup>th</sup> birthday; Friends visit at the Meadows

BY ELIZABETH SORRELL



She is retired and living in San Antonio at the Meadows, a retirement community. You may write her at 730 Babcock Road, Apt. 4205, San Antonio, TX 78201

calling our lives in Laredo.

Chris and Sheila Glassford were also guests here. Their son, Peter, who works for a furniture company, Tables and More in San Antonio, is married to Luz, an artist from Guadalajara. The couple went to Mexico City recently to document her audio piece at the Bellas Artes. Luz Glassford was honored on July 6 as an artist in residence at the Pace Gallery in San Antonio.

**B**orn to Leon and Minnette Daiches on July 27, 1909, Josephine grew up in Laredo and graduated in 1927 from old Laredo High School, where she was active in clubs and publications.

She attended Sophie Newcombe in New Orleans. She married Joe Brand, and the two went into business together. They traveled extensively and bought from topflight markets.

Joe Brand passed away a few years ago. They had two daughters, Patsy Sanditen, now deceased, and Linda Deutsch, who now is one of the Joe Brand store managers.

Though in her senior years, Josephine is very active socially and plays a good game of bridge. She delights in her family, having eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She is a wonderful, generous, and kind person.

## Former students visit Babb

Jennie Reed and Mary Lou Malakoff, the latter an M.D. with a PhD. in biochemistry, recently visited Annie Bruce Babb, their one-time teacher at Martin High School.

Mary Lou, who lives in Boerne, attended Cambridge on a scholarship. Her brother, Poncho, who was a urologist, heads the hospice in New Braunfels. Mary Lou talks of her six grandchildren.

Jennie, who edits *Greater Laredo* magazine, has nine grandchildren. The trio and your reporter enjoyed re-



Josephine Brand

## Stanley Keilson in SA

Stanley Keilson, retired Laredo Junior College teacher, spent the weekend in San Antonio, where he went to see the Meadows retirement community and his friends, Annie Bruce Babb, Elizabeth Sorrell, and Betty Malmquist.

## Fourth of July visitors

From Laredo, they dropped in at the Meadows and saw how that place celebrated with

blue tablecloths and flags. Joe Moreno of the Laredo Public Library and his wife Elena, accompanied by little Brigida, his 95-year-old mother, came to visit with Elizabeth Sorrell. "I'm a friend of Odie Arambula," he introduced himself.

## A visit with Kathy Lowry

What a surprise! I thought that Mary Boone Lowry Ervin, former Laredoan, was coming to see me. It was Kathy Lowry Deely, the daughter of John Lowry, M.D., who died in Laredo years ago. Kathy is eager to hear about her father's death as she is writing memoirs. If you can give her any information, call her at (210) 829-8842 or email her at Kathydee@aol.com.

John, who was a prominent surgeon, had three other children, John J. Lowry, Austin; Joey Lowry, Llano; and Alice, Kathy's twin, who lives in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. ♦



Annie Bruce Babb, retired Laredo teacher, enjoyed a visit with Jennie Reed of Laredo and Dr. Mary Lou Malakoff of Boerne, both former students.

Courtesy Photo

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# MDA Lock Up a success

BY JENNIE REED

By The Way appears monthly in Greater Laredo Magazine. It is reprinted here with permission.



ness leaders in Laredo had the opportunity to do some hard time behind bars for being big-hearted. The arrests took place on Thursday, July 27, at Logan's Roadhouse. The jailbirds were asked to raise bail to send children with a neuromuscular disease to MDA Summer Camp. They raised their bail by contacting business associates, family, and friends for a tax-deductible donation to MDA. This year's event raised a whopping \$87,284. The top jailbird was LuLu Liendo from Luxa International with a total bail amount of \$3,240.

Proceeds from the Laredo Lock Up will help continue funding for MDA Summer Camps, support groups, clinic visits, diagnostic evaluations, and worldwide and local scientific research. These programs would not be possible without the year-round support of all the volunteers like KGNS, Logan's Roadhouse, Laredo Police Department, Webb County Sheriff's Department, Texas A&M Criminal Justice Association, The Laredo Pageant Organization, Knight's Limousine Service, and Verizon Wireless.

MDA is a voluntary health agency funded entirely by individual and private contributions, receiving no funds from United Way or seeking fees from those it serves. Also, both Jerry Lewis and MDA have been presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Medical Association for "significant and lasting contributions to the health and welfare of humanity."

Sweating out being bailed out were such characters as Freddie Flores, Tony Alderete, Luis Hinojosa, Joanna Flores, Lani Cammer, Alonzo L. Ramirez, Aide Molina, Mario de la Rosa, and Carlos Rodriguez, Jr. They even arrested a goodly man of the cloth, Minister Miguel G. Zuñiga of the Laredo Church of Christ.

"Judges" Heatwave Berler and Mindy Casso meted out justice. "Cibolo" and "Sancho," of the South Texas Gunfighters, have volunteered for lo these many years, to ride herd on these desperados. A good day's

We deeply regret that we were out of town for the -- to all accounts -- marvelous inaugural recital of the Sharkey-Corrigan Pipe Organ at TAMIU's Center for the Fine and Performing Arts Recital Hall, with Guest Artist David Heller of Trinity University in San Antonio. E. H. Corrigan has a very deep love of the arts, and especially of pipe organ music. He also loves his hometown. He showed that with this most recent and most generous gift from his Foundation. The Laredo public can look forward to many wonderful hours listening to this marvelous instrument. Dr. Ray Keck III, both a gifted musician and president of the university, must be overwhelmed with this exciting addition to the musical scene in Laredo.

Summer seems to be over, whether we are ready or not, and we never are. Might as well say August is not part of the deal. When moms start frantically getting school clothes and supplies ready, we can be sure summer's a done deal!

We are pleased to have squeezed in a short visit to brother Tommy Leyendecker's condo in Breckenridge, Colorado, where he indulges his passion for skiing, as an instructor. The village is most picturesque, as are most of the small towns in the gorgeous mountainous area. Flowers of all descriptions were blooming their heads off and we were amazed at the energy of those around us, mountain biking, hiking, or leading their dogs on leashes. Everyone seemed bursting with good health and vitality. We even had a George Hamilton sighting in Aspen. Looks as good as he does in his latest TV commercials, tan and all.

Over 100 community and busi-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►►



Photo by Jennie Reed

Josephine Brand is surrounded by her family at her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday luncheon.

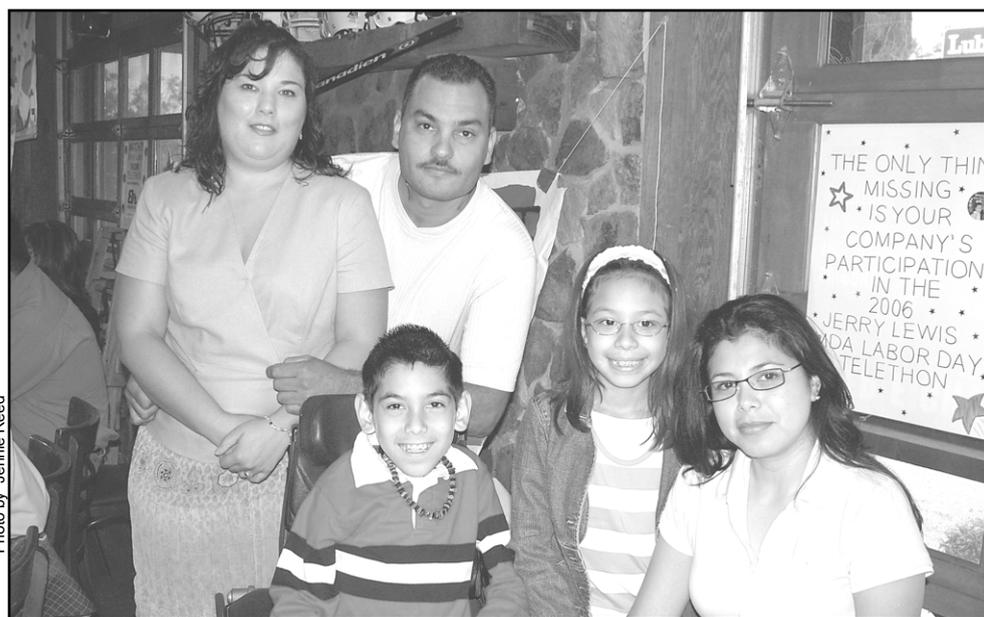


Photo by Jennie Reed

Veronica Molina, Juan A. Molina, Juanito A. Molina III, Brenda M. Solis, and Lupita Molina at the Muscular Dystrophy Lock Up.



Photo by Jennie Reed

"Cibolo" of the South Texas Gunfighters, with KGNS staffers Carlos H. Salinas, "Judge" Heatwave Berler, Dillon Collier, and Adam Kudlo.

work for a worthy cause!

There were birthdays, among them Josephine Brand's 97<sup>th</sup>! Truth be told, she is prettier every year, and bright as a penny, especially if you listen to her bridge partners. Her entire family was there to celebrate at the beautifully appointed luncheon. The 97 gorgeous roses given to her by her favorite doctor, Joaquin Cigarroa, graced the entry table, along with the beautiful chocolate birthday cake. Friends from all of Josephine's circles enjoyed the day with her.

Still glowing over the success of the Putt for Pets Golf Tournament, sponsored by the Animal Protective Society, were grateful sponsors Annelle Garcia and crew! *Mucho dinero* was gathered for the humane organization's many needs. Next year's event is already being planned.

The WBCA season is off and running with the naming of Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst as Mr. South Texas 2007. The Mr. South Texas award is presented to deserving individuals who have made significant contributions to the growth and development of Laredo and the South Texas region.

The Mr. South Texas Selection Committee meets several times during the year to discuss possible candidates. The committee is comprised of past presidents of the WBCA and former Mr. South Texas recipients who reside in Laredo. The committee makes an effort to include individuals from all aspects of life who have contributed to the growth of

the area.

Among those who have been named Mr. South Texas over the decades have been President George W. Bush, Coach Darrell Royal, Lt. Governor Bob Bullock, Dr. Leonides Cigarroa, Congressman Eligio de la Garza, Governor Ann Richards, Charles E. Butt, H. B. Zachry, Vidal M. Treviño, and U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. The recipient also becomes a member of Los Caballeros de la Republica del Río Grande and receives a Caballero Medallion.

One of the most popular and distinguished WBCA events, the Mr. South Texas Luncheon hosted by the Laredo National Bank-BBVA Group, is attended by hundreds of dignitaries and honored guests from both Mexico and the United States. The event will be held on Saturday, February 17, 2007 at 12 p.m. at the Laredo Country Club.

The Washington's Birthday Celebration, founded in 1898, is the largest Celebration of its kind in the United States. The almost month-long celebration includes event for every member of the family. Combined, WBCA events attract nearly 500,000 residents and visitors, and yearly contributes an estimated \$14 million to the local economy.

We are indeed connected to friends by e-mail in this modern day of whiz-bang gizmos. A friend recently responded with a plaintive sigh, that how nice it was to think of that particular pal sitting by their laptop and responding right away. Is this today's version of "the next best thing to being there?" ♦

## The public is invited to the **Alzheimer's Support Group Meeting**

Tuesday, September 5, 2006 at 7 p.m.  
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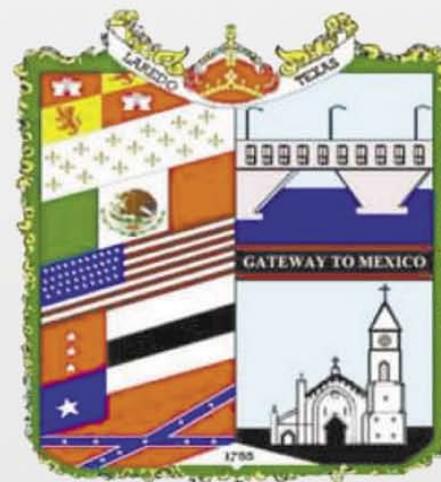
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### New Visions Program opens at Doctors Hospital

A recent ribbon cutting ceremony dedicated the opening of the New Visions Program at Doctors Hospital. New Vision is an adult medical stabilization service for alcohol and other drugs that takes place in a medical surgical hospital. Pictured at the New Vision Program ribbon cutting ceremony are intake coordinators Michelle Evans and Lety Salinas, service coordinator Edna García, Doctors Hospital CEO Al Chapa, regional director Frank Valley, weekend intake coordinator Olga Lopez, and Chamber and Doctors Hospital board member Clema Owen.

Courtesy Photos



### Pinning ceremonies for VFWLA

VFW Ladies Auxiliary 9194 secretary Esther Flores pins a corsage on Catalina Reyna upon her installation as president for 10 consecutive years at a recent officers induction banquet held at Sirloin Stockade.

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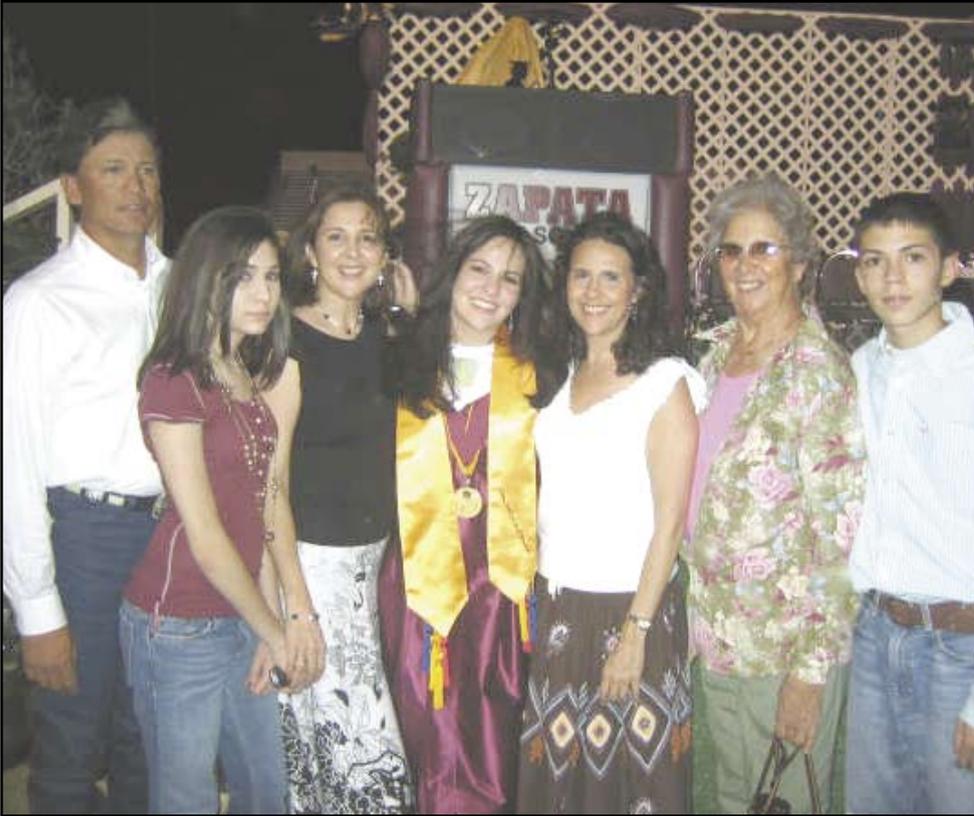
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**Celina Martinez earns top honors at ZHS**

Zapata High School Valedictorian Celina Renee Martinez (center) is pictured with her family at recent commencement ceremonies. She is pictured with her parents José Luis and Araceli Uribe Martinez; her aunt Yolanda Uribe Rangel of Austin; her siblings Celisa and Ricky; and her grandmother Victoria F. Uribe of San Ygnacio. Celina is the granddaughter of Luis Martinez and the late Helga U. Martinez and the late Alonso Uribe.

Courtesy Photo



**It runs in the family**

Zapata High School valedictorian Celina Renee Martinez (Class of 2006) is pictured with her mother Araceli U. Martinez, valedictorian of the ZHS Class of 1979, and her aunt Linda Jo Martinez Ellison, ZHS valedictorian Class of 1992.



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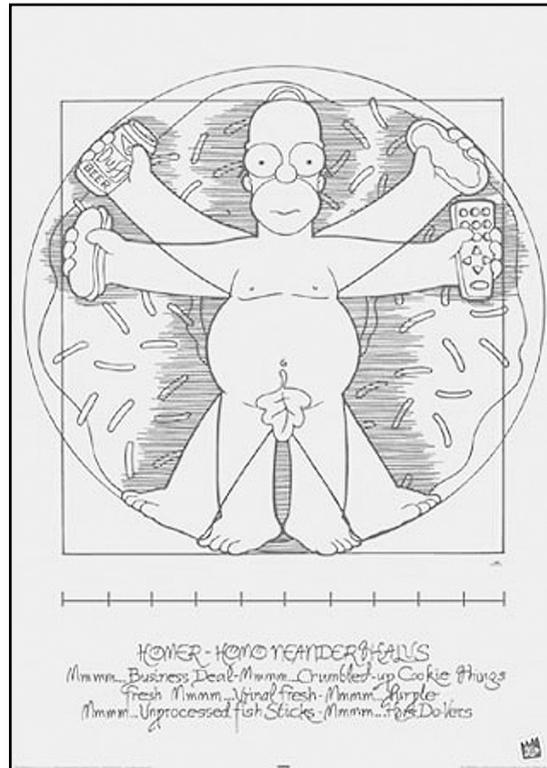
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# Redoing the Renaissance, part II

This is Part II of a three-part series on the Renaissance. Part I (July 2006) explored the Renaissance's impact on art down to the present day. This installment deals with the ominous rise of Renaissance science.

BY WILLIAM H. WISNER

The Renaissance changed the course of human history on many levels and all at once: spiritual, political, and practical. It changed us so much that we cannot re-imagine now the past which it replaced. Itself a "rebirth" of learning, it gave birth to theories ranging from multi-point perspective (which revolutionized art) to inductive reasoning (which made modern science and technology possible). If one had to pick the principal revolution the Renaissance spawned, it may well be its re-definition of the ontology of human dignity and worth. It sparked a revolution in being, moving personality back to center stage after the long anonymity of persons in the Middle Ages. The Renaissance gave a natural birth, first, to the Enlightenment (which posited the social perfectibility of humans) and, second, to the Industrial Revolution (which bequeathed awesome new powers to man by discovering and manipulating the secrets of nature which science uncovered). Drawing out of Renaissance ideals, centering on thinkers like Pico Della Mirandola and Francis Bacon, these developments have cut the work week in half, inoculated the planet against dreadful diseases, placed the Internet into the hands of millions, and sent men to the moon. Almost everything which has made our lives comfortable -- from air conditioning to automobiles -- we ultimately owe to the three hundred years from 1300 to 1600 (more or less) we call the Renaissance, and especially the High Renaissance of about 1500 to 1550. A corollary development, in England, was the promulgation of the scientific method through inductive reasoning by Sir Francis Bacon -- the means by which nature can be studied through hypothesis, experiment, re-testing, and theory development. Through hindsight, it must surely be acknowledged that the Renaissance in Italy and throughout Europe during this time was a period of tremendous good, freeing humanity, at last, from religious determinism and superstition, promoting tolerance among persons as never before, laying also the groundwork for the awesome technological advances which, once set in motion, have never stopped.



Nothing could be further from the truth. For all our attempts at social engineering, no one is any happier. Divorce rates in the West have made it impossible to protect and nurture children. Due to an unbridled selfishness and materialism, Western religious systems are now broken, perhaps for good, and spiritually we are both bankrupt and adrift. Corporate greed, fueled by television and other media, have infiltrated the lives of our young people to such an extent that even simple values like reading a book are increasingly rare in the face of buying (somehow) the latest sneaker or computer game. The universities and other centers of higher learning have pioneered the systematic destruction of literary theory and classical philosophy, just as patronage systems in the arts are corrupt, turning art and artists into trendy commodities. Most frightening of all, science's "awesome new technologies" are poisoning the planet. Our numbers, which we have refused to control, have run amok and are threatening nature's ability to rebound, as are our emissions of fossil fuels. Ominous signs of impending catastrophe are multiplying around us every day, but most persons live in denial about the truth of our perilous condition. Because they have had a future,

they assume they always will. If the worst happens, the millions of persons who died in the plagues of 1348 will be nothing compared to the billions of men, women and children who could perish sometime in the next two hundred years. Indeed, the advent of the Renaissance may have been the beginning of our end. Our society is on a direct line with everything new that it thought or believed. What is most interesting about the Renaissance, finally, is how badly it misconstrued human nature itself, which turns out to be not "perfectible" at all.

I am, of course, framing the question strictly in terms of human survivability and our ability to avoid extinction. The epochs prior to the Renaissance were all superior to ours in this regard. For survival purposes, superstition, illiteracy, and low human populations are all preferable to what we have now. Who could really argue with this?

Religious autocracy pinches off human pride and ingenuity; illiteracy destroys the spread of scientific ideas; and limited populations allow nature to renew itself. Good things, also, are high infant and adult mortality rates and periodic, devastating plagues. It would seem, in fact, where human viability is concerned, that a dumbed-down human population, unable to write or think very well, may be pre-conditions for human survival. Only by such a drastic paring-away of human capabilities can humans be prevented from killing themselves off. I'm assuming here that survival is better than extinction, and that some version of hope and existence is better than self-imposed annihilation.

Besides, the ancient, classical and medieval worlds could hardly be called primitive. They produced glorious cultures and works of tremendous artistry -- like the Egyptian sarcophagi, the Kouros figures of Greece, and the relics from the Sutton Hoo ship burial. There is no evidence that the lack of widespread science and sophisticated technology in these societies limited their ability to express themselves in the most supple and evocative ways. If one examines the life of man without science, the first thing one notices is how

spiritual he turns out to be. A quick reading of Zarneci's famous treatise on medieval art reveals that almost all of it that survives is religious in origin. Imagine a faith in Christianity (if you can) as strong as our faith in science. Until the Renaissance, meaning was vested, not in the individual or in personality, but in ritual actions and belief. These practices centered the culture in the way research and development labs center ours. In a sense, the Renaissance replaced ritual with the individual, altering human history for the worse. Perhaps man should not have too much freedom or too much dignity. In a deep sense, he doesn't really deserve them; the existence of God reminds us of this fact, as does the Bible. Creatures of God cannot be free artists of themselves. Somewhere along the line, we crossed over into a very perverted perception of our own worth and purpose, and as we did so, our happiness vanished.

The Hebrews wrote the basic text which established the three great monotheistic religions of the West. Considering the power of the Pentateuch, it is almost unbelievable, as George Steiner has noted, that humble, hill country shepherds could have risen from rude camp tables, eating soup and bread, and gone off to compose it. Like all great testaments, it is rooted in irony: man is enjoined to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth. He is also assigned his basic nature: a creature that is fallen by his very nature and expelled from Paradise. It is to be expected that a being laden with imperfections, once he has secured the planet, will run into difficulties exactly of the kind we are now experiencing. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this out. The Hebrews offered a solution in the Decalogue, a set of commandments designed to make society possible. It may be that the God in any religion is not as important as the laws for social behavior which flow out of His worship. The Decalogue, the Beatitudes, and the Koran are all attempts at such an ordering, binding people together in an uneasy unity. All societies recognize the difficulty of restraining murder, rape, theft, and adultery in a psychotic monkey who can barely understand an order how to behave. At bottom, religions are all terrifically pessimistic. They understand human nature all too well, and the need to delimit it. Nietzsche, attempting to build a religion after his recognition that modern society

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had killed off God, restated the Hebrew observation: "Human, all too human." Indeed, for Nietzsche, as for believers everywhere, the fundamental difficulty is overcoming ourselves. Last week, as I lined up to fill the gas tank in my SUV, I could only shake my head at my own folly, repressions, and stupidity. My very comfort level was an almost eerie prediction of my own death from the same forces I have written about at such length.

The story of the Fall from the Garden of Eden -- and our subsequent Expulsion -- establishes human nature as fixed and unimprovable. Only through obedience, the story seems to say, can our basic natures become bearable. In Christian teaching, if I understand it correctly, man's evil is also fixed -- unless we are granted grace from God. It may be that that this latter tradition allowed the idea of human perfectibility to take hold, permuting down through the ages. Working in tandem with a growing secularization which brought the medieval world to a close, a greater sense of human dignity and purpose became possible. Early Renaissance art -- the powerful art of Cimabue, Giotto and Massacio -- certainly implies this. Dignity enfranchised the individual and over the course of the next several centuries the concept of innate human evil began to be replaced by a startling idea: that a properly nourished human, shaped

by a benevolent social and political order, could be improved. As I have said, I know of no such instance. The world today is at least as berserk and out of control as at any other time in history. Building on the Renaissance works of Pico Della Mirandola, Condorcet and other Enlightenment thinkers arrived at the idea of the advancement of man as a positive social obligation. The revolutions of 1688, 1776, 1789, and 1848 were all reflections of this assumption. And they were accompanied, of course, by the fateful and ominous the rise of science. The fulfillment of human potential locked us into nature's sights. Today, *all* indicators for human survival are coming up wrong. The primacy of individual fulfillment and our "rights" as people are blinding us to the negative effects we are having on the planet. The one collective emotion which should be galvanizing us to action -- naked fear for our own imminent demise -- is hardly present in our discourse. Yet.

Even here, the ironies multiply. There are over 20 active Green Parties in the world, and in the United States a fairly large environmental movement has existed for many decades. All of these organizations recognize the need to curb the effects of industrialization and burgeoning human population growth in order to avoid dire consequences. If you talk with some of the individuals involved with saving the

planet, they all embrace the idea of making changes "before it is too late." But what if it already *is* too late? What if the existence of the organizations themselves is evidence of the same tiresome Renaissance optimism that got us here in the first place? What if the effort to save us is yet another symptom of the Renaissance's tragic misreading of human potential? And what if environmentalists have a woefully simplistic conception of human nature, repressing the almost certain truth that no one is going to do anything? If I am right, the desire to "act" is already delusional and constitutes a serious intellectual misreading. *What if the unbearable truth is we are all going to die and there's no way to stop it? What then?*

Please don't take my word for it. The British physicist Sir Stephen Hawking has been in the press recently espousing a novel idea about this same question of human survivability. A reporter recently asked Hawking why it was that we have never picked up any indications of intelligent life from outer space, despite the fact that we have been listening to the heavens with huge radio telescopes for almost a hundred years now. Did he believe that there was no such intelligent life elsewhere, and that human life on earth was an enormous, unrepeated fluke? Or is it the case, as is frequently cited, that the distances are too large to permit com-

munication? Hawking's answer was both brilliant and troubling. First, he said he believes there is intelligent life spread all over the cosmos. But he also said that such intelligent life always -- sooner or later in its history -- discovers science, just as we have discovered it. The advent of science seals the species' fate. It speeds up social evolution to such a point that the life form destroys itself in a matter of a few hundred years -- and that is why we do not "hear" from other planets. Other life forms are not broadcasting their existence in the form of radio waves, X rays, or microwaves for long periods of time. So now the distance *does* matter. The "bandwidths" are far too short for us to pick up; no intelligent life, having discovered science, broadcasts for the many millennia required to actually become audible to others. It may be a kind of principle of the universe that intelligent life is short-lived by nature, that societies can never subdue the powers they inadvertently release. How ironic, in the Biblical sense, that the Renaissance frescos of Giotto, which seemed to endow us with new strength and courage, in which man assumed a dignity and bearing worthy of his best sense of himself, should end in his own quickening and demise. One had almost forgotten the works of Francesco Traini, completed about the same time, showing the Triumph of Death.◆



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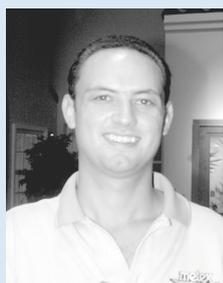
**Marlene J. Iglesias receives Zuniga scholarship at LCC**

Laredo Community College student Marlene J. Iglesias was this year's recipient of the Guillermo Zuniga Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of the former LCC trustee. Gloria Zuniga, wife of the late Guillermo Zuniga, presented the scholarship to Iglesias at the annual LCC Scholarship and Awards Night in the Kazen College Center.

# Building a home theater system

BY WAYO  
FOSTER

The Audio and  
Video Guide



able today, offering true 1080p resolution (that's twice the resolution of High Definition video!). Available for only \$2,700, this 50 inch screen is well worth the money.



Now that you've got your TV, your next decision should be furniture. What are you going to put this TV on? The Sony is a rear projection TV with a depth of about 16 inches, so while it does not take up to much space you will need something to place it on. The most well designed audio/video furniture I've seen is made by a company called BDI. They make some very well thought out furniture pieces that straddle the line between contemporary and traditional designs yet will fit most décors. The 8539 is one of my favor-



ites because it allows the installers to completely conceal all electronics and cables.

One of the best things about this piece is that the top center shelf is used to conceal the center channel. The front side of the drawer is partly speaker mesh, allowing the audio from the speaker to pass through. The remaining space is to allow for CD or DVD jewel boxes. Another great feature is that each shelf is vented. This ensures that none of your products will overheat, which can cause equipment failure. At \$1,700, I think this is a great product. It does what almost all furniture manufacturers have a hard time doing, and it looks good doing it.

With all that out of the way, we've still got over \$8,000. Not bad. The next thing on your list should be the surround sound receiver. This is the heart of your system. The receiver handles all the video and audio signals in your system, so you'll want a good one. The Yamaha RXV2600 is a great mid-priced receiver, delivering 130 watts to each of seven channels. This unit can easily handle the most demanding soundtracks. A great feature of this piece is that you connect all your sources (cable box, DVD, VCR, etc.) and the receiver itself will convert

every input signal to 1080i HDTV quality. Also, by connecting everything to the receiver you won't have to worry about messing with your TV's video inputs every time you want to change a source. Retail price for this model is only \$1,399 and the street price is even lower.



Speakers are next. You should take your time when deciding on which speakers you like. Audio is one of those funny things that are both an art and a science, and while

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►►

I just finished reading a review in *The Absolute Sound* magazine of a Meridian G Series CD player. The player sells for \$13,000 (yes, you did read that correctly). High-end audio can get a little pricey. Consider the Alexandria loudspeakers from Wilson Audio which retail for a whopping \$135,000 (yes, you also read that correctly).

What could a perfectly sane person get for the price of one Meridian CD player? A lot.

For that price you could get a new 2006 Ford Ranger, with its own CD player. But back to electronics -- you could get yourself a great home theater system.

So let's say you've just ended up with 13 grand burning a hole in your pocket, and you want a home entertainment system. It's time to go shopping. You should always start by deciding on a TV. This is most likely the most expensive piece of gear in the entire system. Currently, the Sony KDS50A2000 is the best TV you can buy for the money. It's based on Sony's proprietary technology called SXRD and it can deliver the best images avail-



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there are a lot of objective criteria involved when deciding on a speaker system, you'll also have to rely on your subjective ears to tell you which ones you like. Personally, I think Bowers & Wilkins is the best speaker manufacturer in the world. And while they make a gorgeous \$80,000 pair of speakers, they also make a great \$1,000 pair. B&W has a long history in the audio world. Founded in England, the company employs some of the greatest sound engineers around. They are the reference speaker system at Lucasfilm's Skywalker Ranch and at Abbey Road Studios. Eighty percent of the world's classical music is monitored on B&W speakers. The XT surround system is one of the best looking and best sounding speakers I have ever seen or heard. The complete system including subwoofer retails for just over \$5,500.

Finally, you need a source. And the best source system I can recommend (especially at this price range) is the Sony DVPCX777ES with the Elan Home Systems VIADVDJ. Together these two products allow you to store up to 400 DVDs and review each DVD in an on screen catalogue,

similar to what you see when you press guide on your cable box or DSS remote control. It doesn't matter if you have 40 DVDs or 400; this is a great, great, great component. I personally only have about 50, maybe 60 DVDs, but I like the convenience of browsing through my collection on screen and selecting the movie I want with my remote. I don't have to store the DVD disc boxes or worry about the discs getting scratched. They stay inside the changer and I access them from there. \$3,000 isn't cheap, but when you've got 13 grand to spend and you like the easy-factor then this is a no brainer.



So that's it. All this for the price of one uber-high end CD player or (a Ford Ranger).◆

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# MR. ENGELKE AND THE KISS OF DEATH; PRIVATE TOLL ROAD, STEAMROLLER OUT OF CONTROL



BY BEBE & SISSY  
FENSTERMAKER

**K**iss of Death people fascinate me. I used to listen to them, sometimes taking their advice, but it often had me quitting short of success. Gradually it dawned on me that their negative words were pretty much baloney. They just expected something to go wrong so it often did – for them! Something slightly similar may have happened in the past which ended badly. They work from that memory, basing future calls on it and never examine the decision again. Naysayers who enjoy delivering the downbeat, their dour predictions used to be depressing. Now their “worst possibility” forecasts leave me light with relief.

My favorite KOD person was the late Mr. Engelke, the finest finish carpenter I have ever known. He was persnickety, tough, cranky, and fastidious to a fault, although in a carpenter that is not a fault. I never had to clean up after him, if you don't count the first job he did here. It was a ceiling in the Big Room bedroom which he clawed down, dropping sheetrock, rock wool (old-time insulation), and wood shreds all over the furniture, beds, and floor. It looked like the face of the moon. If I had known that was coming I would have cleared the room of everything. The dinky drop cloths I spread had become part of the mess. I cleaned up the room with a shovel. He must have seen the horror on my face because there was no repetition. He probably was instinctively introducing me to the KOD.

We amicably co-existed for 14 years because he would let me be the helper, and in exchange I listened to his tales of fights, disagreements, and bad family relations. I don't know if he benefited (I did do all the dirty jobs), but I acquired wonderful knowledge. I can look at carpentry jobs and tell if someone knew his business or not, and I can do a few things myself. I can certainly pick out good lumber if there is such a thing besides reclaimed lumber from old buildings. I love to go into hardware stores for supplies. I'd never send a carpenter now.

We shared several sleuthing trips in search of ancient 2x12s and hardware to face doorways and hang doors. We both appreciated and bought old tools. He always used a folding wooden measuring stick instead of a metal tape and he whipped it out like a pistol. I groaned when he brought out his pickup key. He was ruthless about rotting wood, poking his key into lumber in areas I had no intention of replacing. It always got torn out and the job got bigger because he shamed me into it. Once he KOD'd me into a flying trip to Bergmann Lumber in Boerne. We were working on a corner of the barn and found a rotten 4x4 supporting corner post. He said the removed siding had held the Barn up so it might fall before I got back with a new post... but it didn't.

With Mr. Engelke there were so many KODs. Jacking up the roof of the screen porch so that a footing could be poured to hold up the corner posts brought a “Sure it's going to collapse!” which meant possible worst case (PWC). Just establishing the PWC set my mind at ease. Okay, we can deal with that!

Taking the balcony off the Big Room without measuring one single thing was of great concern to me. No problem. Mr. Engelke stood looking over the pile of balustrades and roofing ruins and said, “I have no idea what I'm going to do!” Wow, off the hook again! He put the balcony right back up, and it is an exact copy of the strange original. It has always looked like Great Aunt Lucy threw a Chinese parasol against the wall above the front door. In 1917 after a disastrous fire in 1916, Aunt Lucy, a very creative artist, came out with an artist friend and a crew of workers. They “restored” the Big Room, and it remains as they left it, a giant living room out in the middle of the terrace with a bathroom and bedroom trailing behind.

Perhaps the last KOD Mr. Engelke uttered was the one I remember best. For months our friend Carol and I had collected, sorted, bagged, filed, and boxed family papers. They had been waist-high in the Big Room. One day we hauled all the papers and some office furniture up to the newly Engelked Davis House. It was the very first time all the papers had come together in a serious way, and we were excited.

The Davis House is a tiny one-and-a-half room former home of two Civil War veterans who were friends of our great-grandfather. Mr. Engelke fixed the roof and re-sided it with lumber specially hand-milled to match what was there. After adding a nice

layer of insulation and building little awnings over the sunniest windows, the house was ready to be filled. Several pickup loads later, as we were cramming in the last file cabinets, Mr. Engelke arrived. He stood out in the front yard and looked inside, then at us. He shook his head in disbelief. “My God, you've got too much stuff in that little house. It's only pier and beam. The floor's going to collapse.” Phew, what a relief! We just got the PWC from the King of KOD!

## Bebe Fenstermaker

**I** attended a meeting in San Antonio last week, the subject of which was Bandera Road, between Loop 410 and Loop 1604. The Alamo Regional Mobility Authority (ARMA) was the organization in charge of the meeting. They are the ones pushing to turn Bexar County roadways built with public funds (taxes!) into private toll roads. I did not look forward to the meeting as it promised to be like those in the past, an exercise in patronizing the public. Happily, yes, even mercifully, the wonderful citizens of Leon Valley refused the patronization game the ARMA tried to pull on them. Instead the audience, almost to a person, told ARMA they wanted “no build” on Bandera Road. So instead of a fly-over toll road down the center of Bandera Road, the citizens told ARMA to coordinate the traffic lights and right of way. Many spoke of their dissatisfaction with how ARMA ran the meeting. The SAToll Party was there with a petition calling for a referendum on toll roads ([www.SATollParty.com](http://www.SATollParty.com)). The folks from Leon Valley listened and cheered when the first speaker, a representative from SAToll Party, called for dumping toll road supporting politicians in the November election. That would include

the present governor and many state senators and representatives. Not to mention those in the city and county governments. It was a fed up crowd looking for change!

The ARMA ([www.AlamoRMA.org](http://www.AlamoRMA.org)) was created by the Texas Transportation Commission and the Bexar County Commissioners Court in December 2003 to address traffic issues in the County. The appointed seven member board is beholden to no one and there is no oversight of its members. If that isn't enough to chill your bones, just wait. They do not have to do environmental impact analyses.

In addition to San Antonio and Bexar County there are other cities and counties. One for sure is Houston. The push to turn existing public highways into private toll roads is like a steamroller out of control.

Blue is losing his tail and just as fast, I am picking up the feathers. They are destined for a lady who creates dolls, animals, plastic bag ladies, and all kinds of useful stands. Her creations are adorned with items she finds at thrift stores, garage and yard sales, and others' attics. Bebe and I met her at an arts and craft lawn gathering during Contemporary Art Month. What could be classier than a fist full of peacock feathers? Two fists full!

The snout butterflies are alive and well in our area. They have been with us for about three weeks now. I heard the other day that they will be here for another two. They seem to drift east to west and west to east. They are enjoying the mesquites, acacias, gum bumelia, and any other tree or shrub blooming after the last sprinkle of rain. Evidently the snouts' predators are scant this year, so the butterflies have survived in great numbers.◆

Sissy Fenstermaker

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# The Hallmark of bad writing

BY RANDY KOCH

Randy Koch teaches English and directs the Writing Center at Texas A&M International University.



bly been used against me. Instead, what bothered me most was the implication that faith is a prerequisite of love: "You don't believe in love, do you?"

Certainly, love requires respect, patience, trust, and faith -- but directed at another person, not at love itself. To "believe in love" suggests that devotees worship at the altar of Aphrodite, evangelize and convert nonbelievers, and take St. Valentine as their patron saint. It means maintaining the conviction, even in the absence of concrete proof, that love exists. While in daily life I lean -- so far, some might say, that I've already fallen -- toward pragmatism, I do have a romantic side. However, when I consider from the writer's point of view the question, "You don't believe in love, do you?" I realize that answering, "Yes, I do" leads to one of the most repulsive characteristics of bad writing: sentimentality.

In its most common form, sentimentality results when a writer expects readers to believe in or feel something -- usually love, pity, sadness, remorse, or some other maudlin emotion -- even though the writer hasn't done the work of pro-

viding the details or dramatizing the circumstances that genuinely elicit those feelings. It's lazy, insincere writing, like expecting to be paid for doing nothing or fishing for an undeserved compliment. It's a "form of fatigue," according to artist Leonora Carrington, or when offered in the guise of patriotism, similar to what we saw in the run-up to the current war in Iraq, "a superstructure covering brutality," according to psychiatrist Carl Jung. Unfortunately, however, too many readers either are unaware of sentimentality or aren't bothered by it, probably because we're all constantly bombarded with it.

Several facts reflect the range of our culture's current plague of sentimentality: during the 2002 Valentine's Day week, U.S. retailers sold over \$358 million worth of candy; the dreadfully sentimental 2004 movie *The Notebook* grossed over \$81 million in U.S. box office receipts; and romance novels constitute over half of all book sales. Most telling, however, is the continuing financial success of one of the largest and best known distributors of sentimentality -- Hallmark with their full line of products including greeting cards, Precious Moments, Cherished Teddies, and keepsake ornaments. In fact, the company's 2005 "consolidated net revenues of \$4.2 billion" ("Facts") exceeded the gross domestic product of 45 countries, including the Netherlands, Mongolia, Laos, and Fiji ("List").

Sentiment sells, and because capitalism thrives by selling more than people need or want, retailers and corporations expand the holiday seasons and convince us that if we aren't dragging out our Easter bonnets and baskets on February 15<sup>th</sup> or if we aren't in the Christmas spirit by late October, we're tight, mean-spirited Scrooges. As a result, any genuine feelings associated with or inspired by these holidays have become artificial because advertisers guilt us into thinking that we should feel something when we don't. What might have been legitimate sentiment, or emotion, then becomes sentimentality. We buy stuff because it represents not what we feel but what advertisers tell us we *should* feel.

Sentimentality in writing works in a similar fashion -- the writer now serving as retailer or, worse yet, huckster trying to weasel us out of our money by convincing us that the story makes us feel something. One of the most glaring examples of this is Robert James Waller,

author of *The Bridges of Madison County*, the most sentimental book I've read in recent years and which, out of disgust and to prevent it from falling into the hands of some innocent, impressionable writer, I later flung into a trash dumpster. While a reviewer for the *Kansas City Star* found "this love story an oasis of joy," I found it a desert of drivel, a wasteland of artificiality, a model of mawkishness, and an encyclopedia of sentimental excess. It has one and absolutely only one value: it provides innumerable examples of the worst, most common symptoms of sentimentality.

High on this list of symptoms is the frequent use of unsupported abstractions, particularly adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. Waller, a master at this, vaguely describes photographer Robert Kincaid's boots as "well-used" (2), the Superior National Forest as "nice, real nice" (7), Kincaid's lovemaking with a Seattle woman as "pretty decent" (8), his thoughts as "drifting" (9), and his "sense of the tragic" as "wistful" (9). He constantly praises Kincaid's actions with unsubstantiated adverbs: "automatically" (36), "accidentally" (36), "expertly" (40, 55), "easily" (42, 56, 69), "gently" (52, 69), "carefully, yet casually" (54), "neatly and precisely" (56), and "efficiently and professionally" (86). And most aggravating and foolish of all are the meaningless, repetitive nouns, especially "ways," on which he slaps the abstract labels "steady" (21); "easy," "old," and "disturbing" (33); "unswerving" and "simple" (34); and again "old" (73), "old" (73), and "old" (74). Waller's ways are all just so much rubbish, and because the details are absent, I don't believe any of it.

Idealized, unrealistic characters are another common ingredient in sentimental writing. In *Bridges*, Waller seems to have fallen head over heels for god-like main character Kincaid and uses female characters to praise him. The Seattle woman tells him that "there's a creature inside of you that I'm not good enough to bring out" (9), and a Parisian model claims, "I don't know who or what you are for sure, but please come visit me" (14). However, these are just the prelude to Iowa farmwife Francesca's exceptionally corny memories: that "he moved like the grass itself" (29), that he was "a magician of sorts" (31), that he looked (brace yourself) "like some vision from a never-

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written book called *An Illustrated History of Shamans* (32), that he got in his pickup "with a peculiar, animal-like grace" (36), that he "seemed like the wind" (71), that he lived "in strange, haunted places, far back along the stems of Darwin's logic" (xvi), and the unbelievably meaningless "he didn't look however old he was" (53). In fact, this dude is so fantastic, so otherworldly that he "had come a long way to her kitchen. A long way, across more than miles" (65). Writing like this is more effective than Ipecac syrup.

Because sentimentality lacks substance, many writers try to compensate by overwriting, often using a pseudo-poetic voice that ultimately sounds empty, forced, even juvenile. For example, Waller tries to make the simple act of lighting a cigarette significant and, I suppose, characterize it as a battle of natural forces but only ends up sounding ridiculous: "She cupped her hands around the lighter to hold the wind in abeyance" (39). Who in his right mind says "abeyance"? Besides, everybody knows why people cup their hands around the flame, so there's no need to explain her actions in the first place. Even worse, however, is the self-indulgent, meaningless drivel that follows the first meeting of Robert and Francesca and apparently is intended to make it

special and romantic. Again, notice how Waller tries to sell readers an emotion that hasn't been generated with details: "The generations must roll, and the ways whisper only of that single requirement, nothing more. The power is infinite, the design supremely elegant. The ways are unswerving, their goal is clear. The ways are simple; we have made them seem complicated" (33-34). Unfortunately, Waller, in an effort to sound romantic, writes in a way that doesn't just "seem" but *is* "complicated." And empty and forced and utterly meaningless.

Even more demeaning than the writer assuming that readers are so gullible that they'll believe whatever nonsense they're told is his thinking they're so dense that before they'll understand things they need them explained twice, as Waller does in "the-wind-in-abeyance" example above. This redundancy is another indication that the writer is so much in the habit of telling readers what to think that even on the rare occasions when he provides details that make explanation unnecessary, he explains anyway. For example, Waller says that Kincaid "squatting down to pet [Francesca's] collie, who acknowledged the attention with several sloppy licks along his arms" (52). Unfortunately Waller can't resist showing us

how smart he is since readers are obviously incapable -- at least in his mind -- of recognizing that petting constitutes "attention" and that licking is how the dog "acknowledged" that "attention." He could more simply and more effectively have said that Kincaid "squatting down and petted the collie, who licked his arms." Later, Waller is redundant again as Francesca speaks and Kincaid "listened, saying nothing, nodding in understanding" (66). The "nodding," of course, implies "understanding" since we all use the former to indicate the latter every day, so the explanation "in understanding" is unnecessary. The practice is demeaning and condescending to readers, who, if given the chance, are perfectly capable of interpreting characters' actions and words if the writer does the job of providing details.

The absence of humor is symptomatic of an author who takes him- or herself too seriously, their vanity making characters sound like self-involved dolts who have no flaws and are incapable of laughing at themselves or at how ridiculous they sound even though doing so would make them more human and more likeable. Not only is Kincaid Waller's namesake -- both with the first name Robert -- but Kincaid often sounds like Waller's mouthpiece, spewing the kinds of things the author wants to say to argue readers into believing that he's wise and deep and romantic but which, he probably suspects, are more believable coming from a character. Just as Waller draws attention to himself by overwriting and over-explaining things, Kincaid often points out how clever he is through self-referential comments. In a letter to Francesca, he essentially quotes himself: "I think I put it better the day we parted when I said there is a third person created from the two of us" (27). This seems like a roundabout way for Waller to pat himself on the back for being so clever, again the judgment "I put it better" preventing the reader from deciding whether or not it actually was "put . . . better." In the same letter, Kincaid again references himself as an authority, saying, "what I call the high probability of the improbable" (27), and seems more interested in himself and in having Francesca see his brilliance than in selflessly conveying his love for her. This redirecting of attention to himself is far too common, and even when Kincaid has an opportunity to lavish some attention on Francesca, he turns the spotlight on himself: "I caught the smallest trace of an accent," he says (43) when he might have more selflessly observed, "Francesca, you have a lovely accent."

Waller/Kincaid tells us he's sensitive, but his frequent self-congratulations demonstrate he's simply egotistical and self centered.

The most contrived sentimental device used in *The Bridges of Madison County* (and in Nicholas Sparks' *The Notebook*) is the narrative frame, which is introduced prior to chapter 1 and purposefully removes readers three times from the story's actual events. The first-person narrator (presumably not Waller) relates the story after Francesca Johnson's children relate it to him as a result of having read their mother's journal, in which she relates the events of the summer of 1965, when Robert Kincaid arrived in Iowa to photograph the covered bridges. The implication is that if all these people were moved by the story (daughter Carolyn even "cries openly" as she and son Michael tell it to the narrator), it must be capable of moving us. In fact, the narrator even says, "If . . . you approach what follows with a willing suspension of disbelief, . . . I am confident you will experience what I have experienced" (xviii). Notice that the responsibility here is placed on "you," the reader, who must believe, who must have faith, who must bow to the higher judgment of the triune narrators. And so the writer has abdicated all responsibility for moving us. If you are not touched by this story, according to Waller, then surely you don't believe in love, do you?

Last week, in order to clean Waller's trash out of my system, I read Joan Didion's National Book Award winner *The Year of Magical Thinking*, which describes the year following her daughter's being put on life support and the sudden death of her husband of 40 years. Even though emotion was everywhere, she never slipped into sentimentality. In fact, in reaction to an undertaker's perfunctory gesture, she asserted, "I would be armed against artificial roses" (18), a fitting dictum for writers striving to avoid the hallmarks of sentimentality.♦

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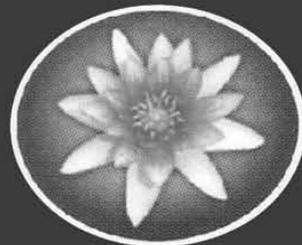
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# LMC's HEALTHY WOMAN REACHES OUT TO LAREDOANS



Taking steps towards becoming a more "healthy woman" is easier through LMC's free community program, *Healthy Woman*. Dr. Ricardo Castillon, specialist in Obstetrics and Gynecology, made a presentation on "New Advances in Women's Health" at the last monthly meeting.

After attending the meeting, 80 Laredo women were able to walk away with insight on newly developed procedures in gynecology and obstetrics. The array of women's health issues that were presented differed greatly,

addressing the range in age of those attending. Topics such as incontinence, heavy menstrual periods, pregnancy, and menopause were addressed.

After the presentation, Dr. Castillon opened the floor to a lengthy question-and-answer session for members. His office staff and wife, Cristina Castillon, were on hand to meet members of *Healthy Woman* after the presentation.

Dr. Castillon has been in private practice in Laredo since 2000 and recently relocated his office to the second

floor of Medical Tower A, Suite 200 at the Laredo Medical Center. Anyone interested in contacting Dr. Castillon can reach him at 956-753-7600.

*Healthy Woman* will celebrate its second anniversary at the August 31 meeting. OB/GYN Maria-Aurora Garcia Marmolejo, M.D. and Podiatrist José Hilario, D.P.M. will be the evening's featured presenters. The anniversary celebration will kick-off at 6:00 p.m. with wine and hors d'oeuvres during the "New Member-Old Member Meet and Greet".

Immediately following there will be a seated dinner during which the featured physicians will address the members. The 2006-2007 new *Healthy Woman* advisory board members will be presented during the evening's events, along with LMC's OB/GYN physicians.

Women who would like to register to become a member of *Healthy Woman* are encouraged to call 956-796-3222. The "Healthy Woman Second Anniversary Celebration" is an ideal opportunity for new members to join.

## Junior Volunteers Successfully Complete Summer Internship at Laredo Medical Center

Thirty Five Junior Volunteers completed a two-month summer internship at Laredo Medical Center. Under the direction of Junior Volunteer sponsor Dolores Martinez, the internship began June 1 and concluded July 31. During that time, volunteers rotated through 22 departments at the Laredo Medical Center. Volunteers were given the opportunity to shadow hospital staff in multiple areas in this community's largest healthcare facility.

Learning was hands-on and provided volunteers with a unique experience. Volunteers will take with them memories of having been part of worthwhile community activities during their internship.

The Sixth Annual Men's Health Conference, Senior Circle's Las Vegas Night, and Auxiliary Jewelry Sale, are some of the major events to which they contributed.

Volunteers also raised funds to give back to some hospital departments that give so much to Laredo. They organized a bake sale and jewelry sale to raise funds for Laredo Medical Center's Pastoral Services.

The Laredo Medical Center honored the Junior Volunteers with a luncheon on August 2. If you are interested or have questions regarding the Junior Volunteer program, please call Dolores Martinez at 796-4658.



Employees of the Month were recognized recently with a luncheon at the Laredo Medical Center honored their Employees of the Month at a hospital luncheon. Pictured from left to right are CNO Frances Lerma, technical honoree Cid Trevino, service honoree Gloria Morales, AECO, John Gallagher, professional honoree Christine Dovalina, and CFO Terry Fowler. Not pictured is administrative honoree Juanita Juarez.



# Consider my list of one-time experiences

BY DR. NEO  
GUTIERREZ

Notes from La La  
Land



Think of how many things you have experienced only once in your lifetime, and let me share my list with you.

Only once have I known of a worldwide-famous, prize-winning musical group from Zapata, my birthplace back when it was a real ranch town in 1936. Only once have I known a Laredo mayor to have an aunt who is a showbiz superstar in Mexico. Only once have I danced on the same dance studio floor, in person, with one of the stars of the original *West Side Story* musical on Broadway. Only once have I had a friend who still remembers the first *Superman* comic book. Only once I have met a real officer in the Israeli military.

Let's start with the untouchable Intocable *conjunto* from Zapata. A lifetime source from Zapata tells me that I was wrong about the two guys I met in L.A. during the premiere of *Real Women Have Curves* several years ago. They were the singing gardener's sons in the movie. He says the two guys who appeared in *Real Women Have Curves* were the guys from La Costumbre, not from Intocable. Those guys are José

Zamora and Edgar Lujan.

Ricardo J. (Ricky) Muñoz, the lead singer and accordionist for Intocable, owns 60% of the group. He is the son of Javier Muñoz (son of Francisco Muñoz and a daughter of Evaristo Gutierrez) and Maricela Soliz Muñoz (daughter of Joaquin Soliz {aka "La Gata"} from San Ygnacio). *Es de los Muñoz de Falcón*.

René O. Martinez, the percussionist, owns 40% of the group. The rest of the band changes over time. René is the son of Carlos Martinez (son of Benito Martinez who used to farm next to Neo's Papa Lupe's farm in Zapata) and María Elena Santos (daughter of Remigio Santos). René's grandfather and our grandfather were very close friends. Benito had nine children -- Mercedes (Gonzalez), Benito, Jr., Juan, Eloy, Mauro, Luis, Carlos, Angel, and Gilberto. I think that only Luis, Carlos, and Gilberto still live.

The other current members of Intocable are Daniel Sanchez, second voice and *bajo sexto*; Felix Salinas, bass guitar; Sergio Serna, percussion; José Juan Hernandez, *animador*; and Johnny Lee Rosas, *bajo sexto*.

The group has had some serious problems, and a lot of very good experiences. On January 30, 1999, Intocable's living dreams came to an abrupt halt when a tragic automobile accident en route to Monterrey claimed the lives of three members of the group -- Angel Farias, video producer; Silvestre Rodriguez, electronic director; and José Angel Gonzalez, the band coordinator. Ricky and René were thrown

clear of the vehicle at 100-plus miles per hour and survived.

Soon after, the Texas Senate, in a move headed by Sen. Judy Zaffirini, passed Resolution No. 221 in memory of the three.

The best anecdote I recall about Intocable occurred on the *Sabado Gigante* show with Don Francisco. Don Francisco asked Ricky who owned the group. Ricky's answer was "René owns 40%, and I own 60%." The follow-up question was, "So when the group plays, say for \$100,000, how much do you get?" Ricky stuttered and responded, "I am not good at math; the manager distributes the funds."

Currently, Intocable, probably is the most influential group in Tejano music, and their tough Tejano-Norteño fusion has become the blueprint for dozens of other Tex-Mex groups. Tight instrumentation and vocal harmony, as well as romantic melodies, are consistently imitated by other great groups, such as Iman, Duelo, Costumbre, Solido, and Zinzerro, among others.

From its beginnings in the early 90s, Intocable went on to major accomplishments, including four consecutive sold-out nights at Mexico City's prestigious Auditorio Nacional. They also sold out in their 2003 headlining show at Reliant Stadium in Houston, which drew a record 70,000 fans. The group has won at least eight of Univision's Premio lo Nuestro awards, their first Grammy in 2005 for best album titled *Intimamente*. Just last month they were named as best in their category at Premios Juventud by Univision. The award list goes on, turning what once was a dream in Zapata into the biggest artists in Tex-Mex music.

At the age of 10, Ricky Muñoz and René Martinez started playing accordion, as they listened to the music of legendary Tejano musicians and accordionist Ramon Ayala. Recording demo tapes in Corpus Christi, they got their first big break after tons of local radio play, and that's when Manolo Gonzalez of EMI Latin in San Antonio signed them to a record deal. Their first album with EMI was *Fuego Eterno*. Then came shows at clubs and dances. Then came an album titled *Intocable*, which earned gold in Mexico and platinum in the US. Intocable celebrated their 10-year loyalty to EMI Latin by re-

leasing a greatest hits album entitled *X*, for the number of years they have been with the label.

But before we leave the showbiz theme, another once-in-a-lifetime for me is having a Laredo mayor whose aunt is a superstar in Mexican theater. I first became aware of super-talented actress-director-producer Carmen Salinas when she appeared in a supporting role in an American film, megahit *Man on Fire*, with Denzel Washington, Dakota Fanning, and Marc Anthony. I see that film on cable now all the time. For her great work in theater, movies, and TV, Carmen was recognized in Guadalajara for 50 years in her professional field. Besides being impresario, she also acts in *Aventurera*, which has been her current headlining project for some time. The production has showcased major acting talents as Edith Gonzalez, Itati Cantoral, Niurka Marcos, and Patricia Navidad, all in the leading role. Although the production has been presented in the past in Nuevo Laredo, it is now ready for a major showcase in Laredo at the LEC on Friday, August 18, at 8 p.m. It's called Mexico's longest playing and most popular musical. Alegria Promotions and SC Entertainment are the presenters. Get ready for audience participation, with themes touching different social issues, including politics. Run, don't walk, to Ticketmaster to get your tickets! Have your big bucks ready

Another once in my lifetime event for me was when I got to dance on the same dance studio floor at Carnegie Hall in NYC with David Winters as my jazz dance teacher. In the afternoons we would take classes from him; at night he was starring in *West Side Story*, in its original presentation. He also reproduced his Babyface character in the movie. Watch for him when you watch cable TV.

Another once-in-a-lifetime event was reading the first *Superman* comic book. Sara Puig Laas tells me that the first one hit Laredo's St. Peter's School like a blockbuster in 1938. All the boys wanted to read it, and even some of the girls loved it because of Lois Lane. Says Sara, "I was only in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, but whoever had some spare change would buy it and share it."

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# Kids Café meets needs of area youth

BY RICHARD NORIEGA

When the South Texas Food Bank started its Kids Café program some six years ago, no one was sure if it would take off. The after-school feeding program was working in other parts of the country, but no one could say for sure, that the concept would fly in Laredo. Six years later it is safe to say that not only has the idea for Kids Café taken off, it is flying at mach speed with no signs of slowing down.

Kids Café is now in the city's six public housing projects and currently feeds around 500 children each week. Plans are underway to open two new Kids Café sites, in Río Bravo and El Cenizo in September.

Elida Gonzalez is a Kids Café coordinator at one of the sites in South Laredo, and in her eyes, it is a Godsend. She says many of the children who live in the housing project have very little to eat at home. One child in particular, an eight-year-old boy named Ronaldo, has a very tough life. His father is an invalid and his mother works cleaning houses. Gonzalez says little Ronaldo's health is also an issue. She cites a recent example when the child had lumps all over his head. His family had no money to take him to a doctor and he suffered for many weeks, until the lumps just started to disappear on their own.

The need for the food bank's Kids Cafés is obvious. With more than a 42% poverty rate for all children in Webb County, a pro-

gram like this is a necessity rather than a luxury. Children need nutrition to do well in school, and with these Kids Cafés located in the poorest neighborhoods, they are able to keep from going hungry. Most of our children qualify for government programs that provide breakfast and lunch; however, after school, they are on their own. Of course, the food bank needs partners to make it all work. At the present time, our partners are the Laredo Housing Authority, Bethany House, and the Laredo Job Corps. In addition, the South Texas Food Bank is talking with several restaurant owners and managers who can partner with the food bank by providing food for children at least one day during the week.

Kids Café also provides a safe haven for children after school. Besides getting a meal, they can receive tutoring on subjects they are having problems with and counseling from gang intervention specialists who warn about the dangers of drugs and gangs. They also are treated to outings and special gatherings every quarter. Perhaps this is why Kids Cafés are such a hit with kids -- they get to be a part of something that fills a need. And as long as that need is there, the South Texas Food Bank will have Kids Cafés. This program is going full steam ahead. If you'd like more information on this or other programs at the South Texas Food Bank just call us at 726-3120 and ask for Richard Noriega. I will be more than happy to provide you with all the information you need.◆



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By the way, Sara is also one of my once-in-a-lifetime experiences because I've never had a friend nicknamed Lala Limonda, which is Sara's alter ego.

My last once-in-a-lifetime experience was meeting a young lady officer in the Israeli Army who addressed the BevHills High School faculty, when I was a member many years ago. She came to mind with all the Mid-East turmoil in the news. She told us that everyone in Israel has to serve in the military. I admired her movie star good looks, but, boy, she was hard as nails when she spoke to us. Let's not forget Israel's formidable defense, or offense as you may see it, which starts with the best jets that the US can provide, as well as other fighting equipment.

The young officer also reminded of something I learned in dance history class. If you look at the folk dances of the Jewish people, you will note that all dances are done in a circle, holding hands, or with shoulders intertwined. That is symbolic of their unity as a people. One thing I'm sure of -- Israel

will never back down.

Some random closing thoughts: Why is it that all the showbiz people in Univision's Premios Juventud looked like pimps and hookers?

Other unrelated thoughts: Remember that everyone seems normal until you get to know them. Never pass up an opportunity to go to the bathroom, and if you woke up breathing, congratulations, you get another chance!

And Normis would kill me if I didn't tell you to look up the MHS *La Pitahaya* and St. Joseph's yearbooks online at [www.bordertitle.com/pitahaya](http://www.bordertitle.com/pitahaya). Marvel at the incredible work spearheaded by Evan Quiros, but that's another story for next time. Thanks to Roberto San Miguel for help understanding Intocable, and to Señor Temo Rocha for pointing us to the *Pitahaya* website.

Till next time, as Normis Adamo says: Tan Tan!◆

*(Dr. Neo is a PhD in Dance and Fine Arts, Tiger Legend 2002, Senior Internacional de BevHills 1997, and retired BevHillsHS Faculty. Contact Dr. Neo at [neodance@aol.com](mailto:neodance@aol.com).)*



# STWP first young writers' summer camp at United Day School

BY HILDA TREVIÑO

Nineteen student participants in the South Texas Writing Project first young writers' summer camp at United Day School. They discovered writing is about thinking, hard work, making choices, and finding meaning. Campers were third, fourth, and fifth grade United Day School students. Norma Quintero and Hilda Treviño, South Texas Writing Project teacher consultants and language arts teachers at United Day School, challenged the young writers to explore their writing interests, recognize their strengths, and learn more about the craft of writing.

Students become good writers by acting like writers, writing for extended periods of time, sharing with others, revising, and publishing. Our young writers' camp goals were that all students gain confidence in their ability to write, complete a number of pieces of writing, and increase their repertoire of writing skills and stylistic options. The 19 campers successfully achieved these goals.

Writing camp started with a daily ritual set by coordinators Quintero and Treviño. For example, students began the morning with Mrs. Quintero singing lyrics of different songs like "Fly me to the Moon," or "Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head." Then, Mrs. Treviño guided them through a few yoga stretches such as "Waterfall,"

"Waking-up," "Eagle," "Warrior One," "Tree," and other poses. Next, students began with a prewriting activity. They observed a football and discussed the basics of playing and watching a football game. "Trigger Words," one brainstorm technique for ideas on a specific topic, directed students to write a long list of words associated with the topic of "football" during a five to ten minute time frame. The student with the longest list read the words and received a prize. Other students were given the choice to add new words to their list. Everyone categorized the word list into nouns, adjectives, and action verbs charts. Camp coordinators introduced samples of cinquain poems and the writing format. To establish a comfort zone, students wrote a cinquain poem titled "Football" as a class. Now they were ready to explore writing an individual poem. While listening to Don Ho's song "Tiny Bubbles," students blew bubbles, watched them float and disappear, and used the "Trigger Words" technique by listing words associated with the bubbles' shape, color, texture, and smell. Finally, they wrote a cinquain poem titled "Bubbles." Excitement grew, and they were ready to share their first poem.

When students savored a round corn chip by eating small pieces at a time, they wrote down their observations, followed "formula" using poetic devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia,



United Day School young writers

Young writers recently completed their first two-week summer writing camp at United Day School. The camp was sponsored by the South Texas Writing Project. Students prepared a chapbook of their favorite pieces of writing and illustrated the front cover. Pictured front row are Joanna Martinez, Angelica Gonzalez, Taylor Peters, Sean Anguiana, Mario Guerra, and Daniela Mendez. Pictured second row are Chantal Martin, Briana Garcia, Aimee Ruiz, Madeline Kilburn, Armando Soto III, and Pedro Alegria. Pictured back row are UDS camp coordinator Norma Quintero, Alejandro Cabezut, Mark Gonzalez, Diego Perez-Garcia, Rocky Ruiz, Michael Momayezi, Gaby Godines, and UDS camp coordinator Hilda Treviño. Not pictured is J. J. Arechiga.

personification, simile, and metaphor, and came up with a creative poem. Of course, writing the "I Am" poem gave students the opportunity to describe themselves, state their beliefs about the world around them, and use repeated

sentence structures to achieve a rhythm or effect.

During one snack break, students ate green seedless grapes and slices

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## Student samples from the young writers' summer camp

**Bubbles** (cinquain poem)  
By Mario Guerra (4<sup>th</sup> grader)  
Tiny, transparent  
Disappearing, reflecting, floating  
Bubbles make me happy.  
Spheres

**Sensory Poem**  
By Angelica Gonzalez (3<sup>rd</sup> grader)  
Crunchy, crackling, corn  
Munch, crackle, chomp  
Pieces jump into my mouth.  
Looks like a beautiful Laredo sunset  
Feels like a rough chair  
Smells like homemade bread  
Sounds like a very old door  
Tastes like ocean water  
It is a flamenco dancer swinging her arms  
and tapping her shoes on the dance floor.  
Corn Chip

**Holy Communion** (personal narrative)  
By Daniela Mendez (3<sup>rd</sup> grader)

Last year, on a warm August afternoon, I was dressed in a pretty white dress and ready to receive First Holy Communion. I wore a veil on my head. After two years of hard work, determination, and concentration, I finally reached my goal!

As I approached the altar, I could feel my heart pounding with joy because I knew my hard work paid off that very moment that I was standing in line waiting for the host. Gradually, I reached the altar, bowed my head, took the bread, and said "AMEN!" That day, I felt very close to God, and I was very thankful to all the people at Blessed Sacrament for helping me achieve this wonderful milestone in my life.

# Falcon Lake hosts Atascosa Bass Club

BY LARRY E. BRIDGEMAN

Larry E. Bridgeman is the owner of Falcon Lake Tackle in Zapata, TX. Visit the Falcon Lake Tackle website at [www.tackle-androds.com](http://www.tackle-androds.com).



Watermelon Red Lizards and brush hogs. Fish came from 10 to 15 feet of water on both the US and Mexico sides of the lake. Mid-lake to lower lake areas produced the biggest fish. Only one fisherman failed to limit on Saturday.

one of two 20 lb.-plus stringers weighed for the day at 22.12 lbs. Dub Billings

weighed 19.39 lbs. for a winning two day heavy stringer of 46.73 lbs., which I believe someone said is a new club record. Ted Wayland weighed a 20.06 lb. stringer, bringing his two day heavy stringer weight to a second place 44.36 lbs. Craig White brought in third place heavy stringer honors with 44.28 lbs. Tinker Pfullman came in fourth with 38.81 lbs., thanks to Sunday's big bass he weighed at 8.71 lbs.

Pat White weighed a respectable 28.2 lbs. for heavy stringer ladies. Thanks to Craig White for the final numbers.

Until next time, have a great day on the lake and always practice catch and release.♦

The Atascosa Bass Club, with 19 members present, had a great day fishing Falcon Saturday, August 5. There were numerous stringers (nine total) over 20 pounds, numerous fish over nine pounds, and a lot of red faces thanks to the South Texas Sun. The club splits their weigh-in between the lower lake and upper lake and we were only able to attend the upper lake weigh-in. However, club members shopping at Falcon Lake Tackle reported a 27.34 lb. stringer and a 8.1 lb. black were weighed at the lower lake weigh-in by Dub Billings, which would place him in first position for heavy stringer. Shane Pullman and Ted Wayland were in close contention for second with 24 lbs. each. Shane had 24.04 lbs. and Ted had 24.30 lbs. Shane's Big Bass weighed 11.48 lbs. and Larry's big bass weighed 10.48 lbs.

Roger Dove, John Pfullman, and Terry Vrana were next in line with 22.17, 21.60, and 20.45 lbs. respectively. Their big bass weighed 6.45, 8.48, and 10.11 lbs. respectively.

Although big fish were caught on jigs, plastics, and crankbaits, the big bass were caught on Magnum Zoom

day and he had four fish weighed.

The bite on Sunday was not nearly as aggressive as it was on Saturday. The fish that were schooling and chasing shad on Saturday were much less active. Sunday's heavy stringer was weighed by Craig White and it was



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# Feeling the Urban Heat Island effect

BY JUAN ALANIS

Juan Alanis is an Associate Member of The American Meteorological Society (AMS) and is currently employed as a teacher at United Middle School.



A UHI refers to the higher temperatures that built-up (urban) areas experience versus temperatures in less built-up (rural) areas. Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Weather Channel show cities can be two to 15 degrees warmer than rural areas 15 to 20 miles outside a city. A significant factor in the creation of an urban heat island is the cutting down of trees and clearing of all plant life from fields to make way for a building and parking lot. The more buildings and dark-top asphalt roads and surfaces there are in a city, the more heat that is absorbed.

An easy way to discover for yourself how black surfaces absorb heat is to simply stand in the sun wearing a black shirt, then stand in the sun wearing a white shirt. You should easily feel a big difference in how much more heat the color black absorbs. Now imagine how much heat a large dark or black-top parking lot with few or no trees, absorbs on a 100°-plus day. And of course, Laredo has several shopping centers with black top parking lots with no trees or plant life.

Areas that have many trees, plant life, and bodies of water are cooled naturally. Trees and plant life absorb the heat instead of the ground. However, plant life releases heat back in to the atmosphere much quicker than buildings and dark surfaces, therefore areas with less buildings and more trees may be cooler than areas with many buildings and few trees. Buildings and dark surfaces ac-

tually trap heat, especially if buildings are tall and/or close together. As result, nighttime lows outside Laredo may be several degrees lower than in Laredo itself. In winter, on clear and calm nights, it is not unusual for areas such as Encinal, Callaghan Ranch, Carrizo Springs, or Freer to freeze while Laredo stays above freezing -- simply because of the additional heat that Laredo absorbs because of buildings and black-top surfaces. Downtown areas are typically the warmest part of urban areas because of how close together buildings are as well as their height. UHIs are not just present here in Laredo; they are observed in most cities across the nation and world. The city of Atlanta frequently has been nicknamed "Hotlanta," because of the effects of UHI. According to research and newspaper reports published through the years, Atlanta is so thick with buildings, wide freeways and other asphalt surfaces that the city can be 10 to 15° warmer at night than its surrounding suburbs 20 miles from downtown (those areas outside Interstate/Loop 285).

"Hotlanta's" heat island effect is so pronounced that the city creates its own micro-climate and low-pressure systems that cities east of Atlanta get thunderstorms thanks to the heat Atlanta creates. According to Britain's meteorology agency, Met Office, a 1965 study showed that the central areas of London on a calm, clear spring night, temperatures dropped to a low near 52° F, while

the suburbs dropped to near 40° F.

In Texas, central Austin will have warmer nights than surrounding suburbs such as West Lake Hills, San Marcos, and Leander simply because of the amount of buildings and surfaces present. Same with San Antonio -- areas inside Loop 410, such as downtown, will be several degrees warmer than suburbs such as Helotes, Boerne, and Lytle.

The number of buildings and surfaces are not the only factors in an area's weather. Elevation, distance from large bodies of water, mountains, among others things can affect regional weather. But as we continue cutting trees and clearing plant life for buildings, shopping centers and their tree-less dark colored parking lots and roads...then the hot weather we have may slowly get a little hotter in the long term. More buildings and surfaces equals more heat absorbed. More trees and plant life equals less heat absorbed.

Obviously, Laredo and most cities will continue to grow in the years to come. One thing that can be done is to design shopping centers and buildings around existing trees and vegetation, and make sure parking lots have many, many trees. The daytime high and nighttime low temperatures that are recorded at all official National Weather Service recording stations and coop-observers are taken in the shade! Temperatures (and heat index) in direct sunlight (no shade) can be 15° or more hotter!◆

While much of the United States and parts of Western Europe experienced well above normal temperatures in July, Laredo itself was near normal. Temperatures in the low 100s are typical this time of year. Preliminary data from the National Weather Service in Corpus Christi showed July to be only one degree above normal.

Is Laredo's growth actually making us hotter?

Laredo has been one of the fastest growing cities in the nation for many years. If you drive through any part of Laredo, it is quite common to see a field cleared of all its vegetation to make way for a new building, shopping center, and most likely a parking lot with it. So, what is the problem, you might be asking? Stripping land of trees and vegetation for parking lots and buildings may be making the temperature hotter. Scientists and meteorologists have been studying what are called Urban Heat Islands (UHI) for over 100 years.

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of red delicious apples. A discussion was held about harvesting, production, distribution, and consumption of these two fruits. Then the young writers were asked to write a story using grape or apple characters or both. Story settings varied from the Amazon to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and even Laredo's H.E.B. store.

The "listing technique" proved effective for the young writers as a pre-writing activity because it gave them choices for writing their personal narrative. Students selected one event that was important to them.

On the last day of the two-week camp, students read the "I Am" poem and their personal narrative to parents, family members, friends, and invited guests. The audience applauded,

laughed, and a few were moved to tears.

Norma and I were impressed with the students' willingness to write and learn about the craft. Quotes from students on the topic of writing:

"Writing is like riding a bicycle because it is as easy to write poems and stories as it is to ride a bike, and both help us to make choices." Taylor Peters (3<sup>rd</sup> grader)

"Writing is like eating buttered popcorn at the movie theater." Diego Perez-García (5<sup>th</sup> grader)

"The summer writing camp was like eating fresh waffles with maple syrup and butter in the morning." Joanna Martinez (3<sup>rd</sup> grader)◆

(Hilda Treviño, teacher-consultant for the South Texas Writing Project, is a Language Arts and Speech Teacher at United Day School.)

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# HIPPY IN LAREDO: a testament to collaboration

BY PATI  
GUAJARDO

Pati Guajardo is executive director of the Laredo Area Community Foundation



With the increased focus on education these days, keeping kids in school and providing them with the tools they need to succeed is a priority. More and more, we are witnessing collaborations among partners coming together from diverse segments of our community and even other parts of the world.

A new program aimed at helping economically disadvantaged parents prepare their children for school will soon be coming to Laredo. The arrival of HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) in our area is an example of collaboration at its best. The Laredo Area Community Foundation pursued an opportunity last year to work with Mendell Granoff, a former Laredoan, who was determined to help young children in our area with their education. The foundation helped bring this individual together with public and private not-for-profit organizations and a local charitable trust.

Funding for the first year of HIPPY has been provided through the generosity of Mr. Granoff's contribution, along with family scholarships from the D. D. Hachar Charitable Trust, in-kind resources from Texas A&M International University's Texas Center for Border Economic & Enterprise Development, and grants from Americorp and the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) of San Antonio. The Laredo Area Community Foundation served as a catalyst for bringing together the partnership.

This project started when Mr. Granoff shared his charitable goal with his professional financial advisors who referred him to the community foundation. He then met with Richard Perez, a foundation board member, who listened to Mr. Granoff extol the success of HIPPY in Israel where he lives. Mr. Granoff was convinced that HIPPY would work in Laredo, helping families

prepare their three-year-old children to start their formal education.

Many individuals worked together to make this project a reality. With the help of Carla Weir of Texas HIPPY, the administration of the Texas Center for Border Economic & Enterprise Development at TAMIU learned how HIPPY works. Dr. Michael Patrick, Richard Perez, and the staff at the Texas Center studied the HIPPY model and realized that HIPPY could make an important difference in the colonias served by the Texas Center. This month the program will be initiated in El Cenizo under the supervision of Jesse Olivares. As stated by Dr. Patrick, this project follows the mission of the Texas Center to "marshal the knowledge and expertise of the Texas A&M International faculty, students, and staff to provide effective leadership and support to Texas border communities in their economic development efforts." He added that the HIPPY program focuses on the way to all successful community and economic development efforts, developing and mobilizing human resources.

HIPPY is currently active in 25 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam. Their slogan is "A love of learning begins at home." The HIPPY model ([www.hippyusa.org/Model](http://www.hippyusa.org/Model)) is "a developmentally appropriate curriculum, with role play as the method of teaching, staffed by home visitors from the community, supervised by a professional coordinator and with home visits interspersed with group meetings as the delivery methods." Each of the four features of the HIPPY model was developed to encourage participation from parents who might otherwise not get involved with their children's education.

Although HIPPY is for any parent who wants educational enrichment for his or her child, the HIPPY model was designed to remove barriers to participation, due to a lack of education, poverty, social isolation, and other factors. For the 2004-2005 school year, HIPPY served 16,271 families in the United States through 954 home visitors.

In a model HIPPY site, 180 children will be served by one coordinator and 12-18 part-time home visitors. Our site in El Cenizo will start with 45 children and three to four home visitors. Once our coordinator and home visitors return from HIPPY training, they will

**"The HIPPY model was developed to encourage participation from parents who might otherwise not get involved with their children's education"**

begin their exciting new venture assisting the families who have made a commitment to implement HIPPY in their home. Aside from the home visitor/parent sessions, each family will dedicate 20-30 minutes per day engaging in hands-on activities with their three year old child. The plan is for the program to grow each year by establishing HIPPY programs in other areas of the community. The community foundation is working to obtain the funding necessary for the program to grow.

In explaining his motivation to bring HIPPY to the Laredo area, Mr. Granoff painted a picture to which many of us can relate. "When we were young, we asked our parents why they had settled in 'hot Laredo.' Only later did I realize that I had been lucky to grow up within two cultures -- the time I spent living on the border was the most enriching time of my life. Later, my studies in child psychology opened my eyes to the importance of family. I practiced child and family therapy in Israel until my recent retirement; following that I was looking for a way to give back to society. I found this program that helps children prepare for school by training their parents to be their first teachers. I spent a year observing the activities, and I witnessed the parents and children grow in knowledge together.

"The program was developed by Professor Avina Lombard at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She dedicated almost 30 years to this program and now it is taught in several coun-

tries besides Israel. Based on my experiences in Laredo, I decided that there are children who could benefit from a HIPPY program. Starting this school year, there will be three-year-old children preparing to go to school while sitting comfortably at home with their mothers. I look forward to witnessing the growth of the program and the addition of more partners investing in the future of our children."

The board of directors of the community foundation embraced the challenge of assisting Mr. Granoff in achieving his charitable goal. We gratefully acknowledge the confidence placed in the foundation by the administrators of the D. D. Hachar Charitable Trust, TAMIU Texas Center, Americorp, and IDRA.

If you are considering options to achieving your charitable goals, please contact the foundation office or any board member. The officers of the board are Irving Greenblum, president; Nancy De Anda, vice-president; Mario Gonzalez, treasurer; and Richard Perez, secretary. Other members of the board are Hank Sames, finance committee chair; Dr. Ray Keck, Candy Hein, Joaquin Romero, Tony Treviño, Stewart Martin, Bill Green, Robert Summers, Jim Harrell, Barbara Kazen, Alfonso Cuellar, and Javier de Anda. Jack Avigael serves as investment advisor. You may contact the foundation office to arrange an informal presentation about the vital role we serve in the community. ♦



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# St. John and St. Matthew debunk Jesus' baptism

By raul casso

Most of us are familiar with the schoolyard game where a story is told to the first child in a row, who then passes the story on to the next, and so on down the line. The amusement of the game results when the story, as it reaches the end of the line, is compared to the original version. Usually, there are remarkable differences between the first telling of the story and the last, and this makes everyone laugh.

A comparison of the story of Jesus' baptism, as related to us by Mark, Matthew, and John, reveals the same sort of changes we find in the schoolyard game. Let's compare them. Mark's is the oldest gospel, so we will begin our comparison there.

Mark's rendition of Jesus' baptism is rather simple. In chapter one of his gospel, Mark tells us how John the Baptist was baptizing people on the river Jordan. As part of his preaching, John the Baptist proclaimed, "There cometh one mightier than I after me . . . that . . . shall baptize with the Holy Spirit" (Mk.1:7-8). Then Mark tells us that "in those days," Jesus was baptized by John. As Jesus emerged from the water, he, Jesus, saw the heavens open up and he heard a voice that said, "Thou art my son in whom I am well pleased" (Mk 1:9-11).

Notice how John does not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, or anyone special for that matter. Mark simply tells us that "in those days," while John the Baptist was baptizing, Jesus simply showed up unannounced. This lack of recognition is underscored by Mark's telling us that the vision of heaven opening up was a purely personal experience of Jesus. There is no hint that John experienced or shared in any vision. Moreover, Mark tells us that the voice that Jesus heard spoke directly to Jesus ("Thou art my son"). By all indications, the parting heavens and godly voices were personal experiences of Jesus upon his baptism by John. Now consider Matthew's version.

In Matthew, Jesus shows up at the river Jordan to be baptized, but now, John, recognizing Jesus, objects, and tries stop Jesus from letting him baptize him. According to Matthew, when Jesus appeared, "John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus answered him by saying, "Suffer it to be so now:

for this it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:14-15).

Why did Matthew add this additional language -- this substantial alteration -- to Jesus' baptism story as told to us by Mark? Well, here's a clue: Mark 1:5 tells us that people were baptized by John "confessing their sins." Luke 3:3 is even more to the point: "and he [John the Baptist] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." The awful implication that Matthew sought to avoid was that Jesus, by going to John to be baptized, was a sinner. By the time Matthew got around to writing his gospel -- which was several decades after Mark wrote his -- he felt a pressing need to somehow explain this problem away. So, in a burst of creativity, Matthew added John's resistance to baptizing Jesus, and Jesus' reply that the baptism by water was only "for show."

On top of that, Matthew also changed the epiphany. In Matthew, the voice makes a public announcement, "This is my son," for all to hear instead of the personal address that Mark tells us was directed only at Jesus. Christian apologists, endeavoring to reconcile scripture, maintain that Mark and Matthew told parts of the same story, and if one blends the two, a more complete picture emerges. Is that what is going on here -- or is it rather a bit of creative license exercised by the writers of Matthew as they developed the Jesus story according to the theological needs of their times? Well, the story gets better. . . .

By the time we get to the Gospel of John, the problem of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist must have become a real source of embarrassment because John does not even mention the actual baptizing -- as though it never happened. The gospel of John, written many years after that of Mark, was peddling a different Jesus. At the time of Mark, Jewish notions of the Messiah, who Mark postured Jesus to be, were still popularly known. The Messiah of Jewish tradition is to be a descendant of David, and a mortal man. By the time of John's gospel, however, the figure of Jesus had evolved into a celestial God-man, in keeping with the then popular pagan traditions. John was faced with a dilemma: he could not depict Jesus as a God-man, meanwhile maintaining intact the tradition of Jesus' being baptized for

the forgiveness of sins nor in any way deferring to a mere human, even if that human was John the Baptist.

Notice how the story changed: John the Evangelist tells us that when Jesus was approaching where the baptisms were taking place, John the Baptist, upon seeing him, immediately proclaimed, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John then went on proclaiming who Jesus was, "he of whom I said." John the Baptist even explained how he did not know who Jesus was, but was baptizing with water in order that "[Jesus] be made manifest to Israel" (Jn. 1:29-36).

So, according to John the Evangelist, the whole baptism by water thing was a mere ploy -- a stage set for the emergence of Jesus. John the Baptist, in the know as he was, immediately recognized the situation for what it was upon the appearance of Jesus. No cleansing of sins needed here -- it was all a put-on for the sake of revelation, and proper recognition.

(By the way, there are those who believe that John 1:32-34 is either not referring to Jesus' baptism or referring to it as something that occurred on a different chronology in order to reconcile with Mark 1:9-11, and to obviate the "40 days in the desert vs. wedding feast at Cana" problem. This interpretation requires further rationalizations, however, of why John appears to predict Jesus on the previous day in much the same way as he predicts Jesus in the other Gospels (see: Jn. 1-27; Matt. 3:11-12; Lk. 3-16-17). Such attempts at "harmonizing the gospels" are, in my view, unconvincing).

Notice, also, how John tells us that it was John the Baptist, not Jesus, who had the epiphany: the heavens open up to John the Baptist, and it is John the Baptist who sees the dove descending. Thus the story completely changed by the time it went from Mark to John, as did the times and the theological needs of those writing the gospels. By then, their intended audiences held to substantially different beliefs. What the writers of John were by then trying to convince people of had also, accordingly, changed.

Yet there is another, and more disturbing, contradiction about the baptism story that lays bare the lie, and exposes Jesus' baptism as a work of literary fiction. Both Matthew and Luke tell us how John the Baptist had been arrested

by Herod Antipas (as we know, John was executed by this Herod and wound up having his head placed on a platter) (Matt. 11:2; Lk. 3:19-20). Matthew tells us, "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:2-3).

Luke tells us the same basic story, "And the disciples of John showed him [of what Jesus had been doing], and John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, art thou he that should come? Or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee saying, art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (Lk. 7:18-20).

Don't ask me why Matthew put that passage into his Gospel after telling us (unlike Mark) how John the Baptist unmistakably recognized Jesus when he baptized him. Maybe he saw the story in Luke and decided to leave it there. At any rate, he really screwed up. Why would Matthew, in agreement with Luke, tell us later that John only heard about Jesus after he was imprisoned, and that he was not sure who Jesus was such as to dispatch two disciples to find out?

Notice how resoundingly Matthew and John contradict the changes and additions they made to Jesus baptism story as compared to Mark's initial telling. Why would John the Baptist, who tried to stop Jesus from being baptized by him (according to Matthew), and who publicly proclaimed Jesus to be the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (according to John), fail to recognize who Jesus was later on while he, John the Baptist, was in prison?

Matthew really stuck his foot in his mouth. Luke, unwittingly, helped him along. Not only did Matthew change Mark's story to suit his needs, but he clumsily included this other story about John in prison that shoots both him and St. John down completely. Lucky for them, they were writing to illiterate hordes, and would enjoy the luxury of reading selected passages to them. At the time of their writing, St. Matthew and St. John had no fear of any comparative studies being made by anyone. Simply put, they thought they'd never get caught.◆

# The last words of Jesus

Dear Raul,

Death can mark its presence with notable comments. You listed famous quotations and matched them to their authors. They all had a death-bed in common, but the conditions of their death were different. Jesus had accepted the punishment to prove to his enemies that he stood by the radical political perspectives he preached. He knew that his submission to their judgment would have the greatest impact on his mission. You can relate his perspective to that of Socrates: both could have fled, but in doing so they would have undermined the principles they had preached and upheld. They would have betrayed their ideals. There is a difference -- Socrates did die, Jesus might have lived after the crucifixion.

Using the peshar technique which looks into stories with double meaning and interfacing them with the working knowledge of Jewish laws in relation to time frames and locations, it is very possible he did not die. He rose again because he had been laid as if already dead. He had been given a poison that would nullify his pain. As soon as he was laid in the tomb, he was attended with ointments; these could have been used to purge his body of the poisonous effects. I am proposing this in a very simplistic fashion. Barbara Thiering, an expert in the peshar technique, goes to great lengths to provide the necessary data and timeline to support this theory.

If you read all accounts of the "resurrection" in the New Testament you

will notice that not all writers make reference to it. You mention John as quoting Jesus saying "it is finished" and maybe he thought he was before he passed out. Each of the New Testament writers spoke of the "appearances" on different days after the crucifixion, but if you look closely, the resurrection does not seem to be the pivotal central event of their teachings and interpretation of Christianity and its new political thought. As an example, Paul focuses on the suffering on the cross. He identifies this ultimate sacrifice as the force that mitigates any temple sacrifices in the future, a practice Jesus wanted to stop. Their interpretations were based on showcasing their current belief systems, which were undermining the traditional spiritual and social practices of the time period.

At the Council of Nicea, the Christian Bishops and Constantine took these stories that were meant for different levels of audiences and made them dogmatic truths. The parable's superficial virtues became the cornerstone of Christian faith. The original political message was now diluted. It had to meet the minds of a population that needed to believe that Jesus the Christ was important because he had a unique divine nature that was not human and not because he had brought dramatic change to the social and spiritual perspectives of the epoch.

Jesus the Christ, a most advanced human being, was fully aware of the parameters by which we function in this physical world, even though his consciousness was in tune to a high-

er echelon of "being." In the realm of eternity there is no time or space; the message he was promoting "is." A birth, a baptism, a wedding feast, a ministry, a death and a resurrection are all functions of time and space. Time and space are environments by which we can function or malfunction. They are the limitations imposed on our genre, the necessary requirements for our physical bodies and small minds to grasp the basic elements of performance requirements that lead to a comprehension of eternity. This eternity was the core value of the preaching of Jesus the Christ. The eternal kingdom of his father, our father, was the focus of his spiritual and social revolution.

Eternity has been proposed and misunderstood as a reward or damnation in relation to our individual earthly conduct. In eternity, time and space do not exist and so the byproducts of earthly demeanor or "misdemeanor" that send you somewhere are very simplistic. So what is our mission in the earthly realm when it is so riddled with conflicting messages and "only one way" solutions? Collectively, as a people, we suffocate our consciousness, we do not move as one to a higher level; we become entangled in the mess of misinterpretation of misapplication of Christian values. We navigate a present reality under the impression that if we comply with somebody's rules we will gain some eternal heaven space or location. Compliance with some rules might give us a more peaceful existence, but the existence should attend a broader function with a more finite spectrum.

In that spectrum, there is no space, there is no location; there is only the gift of our divine energy lavishly provided by the Supreme Divine Energy. All energy seeks to go back to its source of its own volition. Jesus the Christ spoke of it over and over again: the "kingdom" was not of this world, therefore none of our earthly ideas can apply to its existence. We do not travel to any place when our body expires; our divine energy, our spirit is released from a mortal body and it bonds to the Omnipresent Divine energy that is in all we see and feel. The trick is in the "bonding" of these

energies. If we have spent our earthly time in frivolous pursuits that expire our energies we will not have much to take back; if we have suffocated our energies with evil we will have even less, but -- if we have multiplied it we will enhance our gift from our creator and can expand to a higher realm of consciousness in unison.

This is possible only by a decision of our free will to actively engage in the expansion. A small, weak energy dwindles and fades in the presence of a more powerful source; only a strong energy prevails and is co-opted by its creative source. Whether Jesus died on the cross or of old age is inconsequential and so are any last words. His message was about changing our thought process to understand that our individual life cycles are circular, not linear. There is no beginning or end. Our divine energy prevails forever in whatever strength we have chosen to expand it. Expansion is available only through the mortal body. It is the body that creates the vibrations that expand or diminish its energy fields. It is the mind in the body that chooses the vehicle, the mission by which to expand or diminish its energy. The vehicles are many, they vary in accordance to the epoch. However, they will always share a common element, a mission of service so all people may participate as one with the Divine Source. To squander our gift by neglect or indifference will result in the darkness often called hell. In darkness, no light can be mirrored; there will be no oneness with the divine.

Jesus the Christ and his teachings were affirming that there is no time and space except on earth and that on earth these become mercy and love. Time is merciful, it projects us forward in hope, space contains the events that teach us how to love. We are now grounded in mercy and love because of the insights of Jesus the Christ. His message was about the continuous cycle of "being." Let's not lose his message by focusing on stories and details of births, deaths, and resurrections. Let's use the peshar technique and read between the lines.



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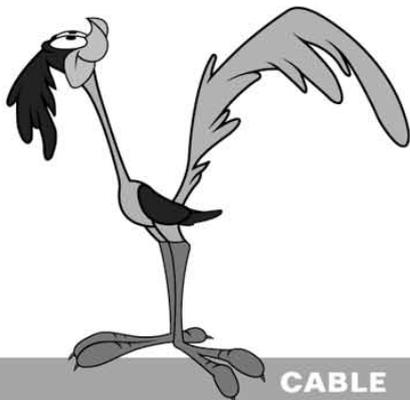
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