

Local/State

Funeral services announced

Rosa De La Garza

Rosa De La Garza, 87, passed away on Feb. 15, 1998 at a local hospital in San Antonio.

Mrs. De La Garza was a life-long resident of Laredo, and an active member at San Jose Catholic Church.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Alfonso De La Garza.

Mrs. Rosa De La Garza is survived by her brother, Marteniano Salinas; by her niece, Angie (Lalo) Muñoz; and by her two grandchildren, Melisa and Claudia Muñoz, all of San Antonio.

A rosary will be recited on Monday evening, Feb. 16, 1998 at Joe Jackson Springfield Funeral Chapels, 1900 Springfield. Visiting hours will be held from 4 to 10 p.m.

Funeral services will be held on Tuesday morning, Feb. 17, 1998 from Joe Jackson Springfield Funeral Chapels, 1900 Springfield to San Jose Catholic Church for a Celebration of a Holy Mass.

Interment will follow in the family plot at the Calvary Catholic Cemetery.

For more information regarding the hours, please call Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels at 722-0001.

Arrangements are under the direction of Joe Jackson Springfield Funeral Chapels, 1900 Springfield.

Beltran, Sandra Yvonne Beltran, Claudia Carolina Beltran, all of Laredo; also, by her great-grandchildren, William Sanchez Jr., Phillip (Joella) Sanchez, Gregory La Hue Jr., Genevieve La Hue, Zachary Paul Sanchez, and Christopher Sanchez, all from San Antonio; she is also survived by her great-great-granddaughter, Erica Michelle Sanchez of San Antonio.

A rosary will be recited on Tuesday evening, Feb. 17, 1998 at Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels, 719 Loring at Cortez. Visiting hours will be held from 4 to 10 p.m.

Funeral services will be held on Wednesday morning, Feb. 18, 1998 from Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels to San Martin De Porres Catholic Church for a Celebration of a Holy Mass.

Interment will follow in the family plot at the Calvary Catholic Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the direction of Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels, 719 Loring at Cortez.

Francisco Mora Jr.

Funeral services for Francisco Mora Jr., 66, who passed away on Saturday, Feb. 14, 1998 are pending at Nieto Dickey Lopez Funeral Directors, 802 Coke St. For more information, call the funeral home at 723-3723.

(Ramona) SiFuentes, Rosana Ruiz, and Marisol Cisneros, all from Laredo; by her sister, Julia Melohor of Laredo; also, by other relatives, nieces and nephews that will greatly miss her.

A rosary will be recited on Monday evening, Feb. 16, 1998 at 7 p.m. at Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels, 719 Loring at Cortez. Visiting hours will be held from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Funeral services will be held on Tuesday morning, Feb. 17, 1998 at 8:40 a.m. from Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels, 719 Loring at Cortez to San Augustin Catholic Church for a celebration of a Holy Mass.

Interment will follow in the family plot at the Calvary Catholic Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the direction of Joe Jackson Heights Funeral Chapels, 719 Loring at Cortez.



JOSE DE LA CRUZ

Jose De La Cruz

Jose De La Cruz, 53, passed away Thursday, Feb. 12, 1998.

Mr. De La Cruz is survived by his wife, Yolanda De La Cruz; sons, Jerry (Anna) De La Cruz, and Albert De La Cruz; daughters, Alma (Fred) Garcia, Sandra De La Cruz, Adriana (Robert) Moreno, Norma (Carlos) Herrera; 16 grandchildren; also, numerous brother and sisters, and other relatives.

Visitation will be held Monday, Feb. 16, 1998 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Nieto Dickey and Lopez Funeral Home Chapel. A prayer service will begin at 7:30 p.m. with Rev. Reymundo Silva officiating.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday Feb. 17, 1998. Procession will depart the funeral home at 8:45 a.m. to Templo Cristiano Asambleas De Dios, 1917 San Enrique for a 9 a.m. service.

Burial will follow at the City Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nieto Dickey and Lopez Funeral Directors, 802 Coke.



JOSEFA CASTILLO

Josefa Castillo

Josefa Castillo, 54, passed away Friday, Feb. 13, 1998 in a local hospital.

Visitation was held on Sunday, Feb. 15, 1998 from 4 to 10 p.m. with a rosary being recited at 7 p.m. in the Hernandez Lopez and Sons Northside Chapels, 800 Boston St. at San Bernardo Ave.

Funeral services will begin at 8:10 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 16, 1998 from the Hernandez Lopez and Sons Northside Chapels. Holy Mass will be celebrated at 8:30 a.m. at San Jose Catholic Church.

Interment will then follow in the Calvary Catholic Cemetery.

Arrangements are under the direction of Hernandez Lopez and Sons, Northside Chapels, 800 Boston St. at San Bernardo Ave., Laredo, (956) 723-2979.

Teen convicted of capital murder in 1996 slaying of cheerleader

MONTAGUE, Texas (AP) - A jury took just over seven hours Saturday to convict an Oklahoma teen of capital murder for helping to kill a 16-year-old Waurika, Okla., cheerleader.

Joshua Bagwell, 19, sat expressionless when state District Judge Roger Towery pronounced him guilty of capital murder and conspiracy to commit capital murder for his role in the slaying of honor student Heather Rich in October 1996.

Bagwell now will serve an automatic life sentence for the capital murder charge, and faces a sentence of 5 to 99 years for the conspiracy count. The jury will reconvene Tuesday to decide that sentence.

Bagwell was arrested with 18-year-old Randy Wood of Waurika and 21-year-old Curtis Gambill of Terral, Okla., about two weeks after the girl's body was found dumped in a rural Montague County creek.

The victim's parents hugged upon hearing the verdict. Bagwell's grandmother shielded her face and sobbed.

"Now we can begin the grieving process because we've been messing around with the trial and the legal system so far," said Gail Rich, the victim's mother. "We can go ahead and grieve like normal people. This won't give us closure, but it will allow us to start finding closure."

Montague County District Attorney Tim Cole said he was relieved with the verdict.

"It's really a strange feeling," he said. "On the one hand, I'm glad that justice was done in this case. On the other hand, it's another young life gone down the tubes. But I do feel good that we got some justice for Heather."

Cole said he doesn't know what sentence he'll ask the jury to give Bagwell on Tuesday. Regardless of what the jury decides, Bagwell will serve both sentences concurrently, he said.

At minimum, the Waurika teen must serve 40 years in prison before he becomes eligible for release.

Bagwell told jurors he was not aware that Gambill and Wood planned to kill Miss Rich. He

testified that they feared she would file rape charges against them because he had sex with her while she was drunk and unconscious.

On Thursday, Bagwell said he was several feet away when Wood shot the girl nine times in the head and back with a shotgun.

Bagwell said his only mistake was helping to cover up for Wood in the weeks following the murder.

Gambill, who pleaded guilty to murder charges and was sentenced to life in prison during an October trial, first testified that he shot Miss Rich. He later recanted his testimony and accused Wood of the shooting.

Wood claimed all three men discussed, or at least heard, Gambill's plan to kill the girl after a night of drinking and sex. He said Bagwell carried the still-unconscious girl to the side of a bridge in rural Montague County where Gambill shot her.

Wood is due to be tried later. Since he reneged on a plea agreement, he is eligible for the death penalty.

Half marathon becoming an established event

BY RICK PAUZA
Times staff writer

Laredo's recent half marathon doubled its participation over last year and is becoming an established state event, Kiko Tamez reported last week to the city Convention and Visitors Bureau Advisory Board.

The bi-national race, held Jan. 27, drew 328 runners, up from 150 last year, said Tamez, LCVB advertising and promotions coordinator.

Some of the local hotels landed more business due to the event. Board member Dan Rodriguez, of Red Roof Inns, said he got 20 room nights Friday and 55 the Saturday before the race.

But more important than individual hotels showing increases is that the race is becoming known to Texas and Northern Mexico as an established race,

Tamez said.

Also successful was Laredo's participation in last week's Expo Vacaciones in Mexico City, one of the largest tourism trade shows in the world.

LCVB Director Larry Dovalina said that Laredo's booth had the most staffing of the Texas contingent and that thousands of brochures and other material were handed out.

"We outstaffed everybody that was there. We gave out information faster than anyone else," Dovalina said.

The city heavily promoted its soon-to-open passenger terminal, he said.

LCVB Marketing Manager Ramon Hernandez noted that the expo drew participation from tour operators from across Mexico, and generated good leads for the participating hotels.

Speaking of the airport,

Dovalina said that LCVB for promotional purposes needs a firm date for the opening of the passenger terminal, which has been pushed back to April.

Dovalina and Hernandez also announced that a March 25 fashion show and tourism fair is scheduled for San Luis Potosi.

In later discussion, Dovalina said that a joint city and Laredo Center for the Arts project to purchase and restore the Plaza Theater will be brought shortly to City Council.

The potential use hasn't been strictly defined, but Margarita Araiza, executive director of Webb County Heritage Foundation, stressed that it would be multiple use.

Araiza also announced that LCA would be hosting brown bag jazz brunches in front of the Arts Center, weather permitting, starting Friday.

Sale benefits persecuted Christians in the Sudan

Remembering the plight of their suffering brothers and sisters in Sudan, a Laredo ecumenical Christian group has raised money to buy basic necessities that will be sent to Africa.

AGAPE-Sudan hosted a garage sale Feb. 7 to raise money for Sudanese Christian refugees whose homes have been burned and who have been forced to flee for their lives.

The money raised will pay for "LifePaks", including a large cooking pot, blanket, mosquito net, shovel, matches, bowls and a Bible. The packages will be delivered by "Voice of the Martyrs," a missionary group.

Garage sale shoppers saw a video detailing how Sudanese Christians have suffered. Hundreds have been crucified on trees. Others have been hanged, drowned or burned.

Ray Thorne, who has taken missionary trips to the African country for "Voice of the Martyrs," spoke on suffering in the Sudan when he visited Laredo in October 1997. He said that since 1989, when an Islamic

fundamentalist government took control in Sudan, up to 2 million people have been killed, including "hundreds of thousands of Christians."

Many other Muslims, however, disagree with what the Islamic fundamentalists are doing in countries like Sudan, Thorne indicated.

After listening to Thorne's speech, local Christians decided to do something to help. AGAPE-Sudan was formed in November 1997.

The group's goals include prayer, educating the public about human rights abuses, action (sending humanitarian aid), and advocacy for Sudanese Christians.

The group is focusing on helping Sudanese children, including refugees who are starving and in need of medical care. Some children have been kidnapped from their families and sold into slavery.

Christian Solidarity International, a human rights organization, estimates that more than 25,000 Sudanese

children (mostly Christians) have been abducted from their families and sold into slavery.

Karen Kraus Mahaffey, one of the group's organizers, said one of AGAPE-Sudan's main goals is to inform Laredoans that slavery is occurring in Sudan.

"Many Laredoans have been moved by the current movie, 'Amistad,' which depicts the inhumanity of slavery in the 1800s," Kraus Mahaffey said. "But they'd be shocked and horrified to realize that slavery is alive and well in Africa in 1998."

Americans, who have so much freedom, have a responsibility to be advocates for those who can't speak for themselves, especially innocent children, she said.

AGAPE, which is the word for Christian love, is also an acronym for "Ask God to Assist the Persecuted and their Enemies."

The group meets once a month, and their prayer group meets weekly. For more information, contact Karen Kraus Mahaffey through the First Presbyterian Church.

Oprah defamation trial takes Presidents' Day off

AMARILLO, Texas (AP) - As if Oprah Winfrey's four-week-old beef defamation trial needed another reason to stretch on, it's getting one Monday.

The Presidents' Day federal holiday means attorneys won't reconvene in U.S. District Judge Mary Lou Robinson's court until Tuesday morning, when she'll hear arguments concerning a defense motion to issue a verdict in their favor.

A group of Texas cattlemen rested their case Friday. They

accuse Ms. Winfrey, her production company and a vegetarian activist guest of causing cattle prices to drop by unfairly suggesting U.S. beef consumers were at risk from catching a fatal brain ailment from tainted meat.

Ms. Winfrey's April 16, 1996, show touched on mad cow disease, which has ravaged British herds since the 1980s and is suspected in causing 23 people to die of a similar ailment.

Neither the bovine nor the human illness has been detected

in the United States.

Outside the presence of jurors, attorneys will debate Tuesday whether Judge Robinson should rule in favor of the defense. Defendants claim plaintiffs failed to offer enough evidence and that the Texas law allowing them to sue is unconstitutional anyway.

If Judge Robinson allows the trial to continue, jurors will return to hear the defense's case begin Wednesday. The trial could last another two weeks if both sides use all their allotted time.

HOROSCOPE

What kind of day will tomorrow be? To find out what the stars say, read the forecast given for your birth sign.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19)

Upheavals are put aside for the time being. You and that family member finally make peace. An evening social visit is relaxing.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20)

Whether you're ready or not, you can expect some visitors. A new project or work assignment will have you hopping for some time to come. Utilize your innovative side.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20)

Financial interests are favored, but that doesn't mean you have to grant a friend's request for a loan. As you know, this person can conveniently forget about debts. Be careful.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22)

You're thinking with your heart instead of your head. A more down-to-earth approach is needed. A late-day chat leads to new insights.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

You can certainly be strident when expressing your viewpoint. Granted, you think you're right. However, others don't always see it that way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

You're inundated with sales pitches and promotions. However, this isn't the time to commit yourself financially. Saving money is a better idea.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You have a lot of questions about what a loved one is

proposing. Do some research before making a final decision. You'll both be happier about it.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

You can't understand why a certain co-worker seems to be thwarting you at every turn. Could this be some jealousy? Try to get to the bottom of this situation.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

You're tempted to take some financial risks. However, a look at that investment you're considering is a wise idea. Its history isn't very reassuring.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

A cherished friend needs your special caring touch. Caught in a situation this person can't handle, you have the right words to calm and soothe.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

You can easily look through what that certain friend is saying and get to the truth. However, try not to be too disappointed. This person has done such things in the past.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

Don't be afraid to break out of your routine. A change of pace is good for people. Once you try that new venture, you're happily surprised.