

CRIME

## Man is executed for S.A. murder

By Eva Ruth Moravec

Rodrigo Hernandez, 38, was executed Thursday evening for raping and strangling single mother Susan Verstegen behind a grocery store in San Antonio in 1994 before dumping her body in a 55-gallon barrel at a nearby church.

Hernandez said little in the moments before he died.

"I want to tell everybody that I love everybody," he said. "We are all family, people of God almighty. We're all good. I'm ready."



**Susan Verstegen of San Antonio was raped and strangled by Rodrigo Hernandez in 1994.**

As the lethal injection took its course, reporters heard him say, "This stuff stinks, man. Almighty," although a state transcript released minutes later quoted it as, "This stuff stings, man."

His relatives there to witness the execution sobbed. Verste-

gen's son Chuck Monney, 33, stood with his arms crossed, swaying from side to side, and kept his eyes on Hernandez.

Verstegen's slaying was a cold case until 2002, when a DNA sample Hernandez provided as a condition of his parole for an assault in Grand Rapids, Mich., matched evidence collected in the San Antonio killing.

In 2009, while he was on death row, Michigan detectives also connected him to the 1991 rape and fatal shooting of Mu-

**Executed continues on B8**



Bob Owen / San Antonio Express-News

**Verstegen's slaying was a cold case until 2002, when a DNA sample Hernandez (left) provided in Michigan matched evidence collected in the San Antonio killing.**



**Sichan Siv arrived in the U.S. in 1976 with his mother's scarf, an empty rice sack and \$2.**

PROFILE

## Envoy is now at home in S.A.

By Elaine Ayala

Even in a room full of Optimists meeting at a Luby's Cafeteria this week, Sichan Siv's irrepressible hopefulness filled the room.

Optimists might be cheery, but Siv's optimism has been called "relentless."

It became evident as the former U.N. ambassador told the story of his journey from the Khmer Rouge's killing fields in Cambodia to an office a few doors down from President George H.W. Bush.

Now retired from Washington, Siv, 63, has settled in San Antonio. He's the city's most prominent person of Asian descent, said May Lam, founder of San Antonio's annual Asian Festival.

Siv will be part of the event — which is celebrating its 25th anniversary Saturday — talking to festivalgoers about the new Cambodia. He also will sign copies of his 2008 book "Golden Bones: An Extraordinary Journey from Hell in Cambodia to a New Life in America."

His wife, Martha Pattillo Siv, will be there, too, promoting handicrafts made by women in Asia.

Siv has embraced his new home, telling Optimists the oft-told adage that he wasn't born in Texas but got here as soon as he could.

"He's such a patriot," said his wife. "He's an American, No. 1. But he's a Texan second."

Besides a busy speaking schedule, he serves in the Volunteers in Airport Policing at San Antonio International Airport and as a pilot in the Bexar

**Siv continues on B8**

CHARITY



Photos by Jerry Lara / San Antonio Express-News

**At left: Ethan Lambert gets ready to have his picture taken with the Harlem Globetrotters' Big Easy Lofton (right). The event benefited the Starlight Children's Foundation, which supports children with life-threatening or chronic illnesses and their families.**

**Below: Johnson High School students Marcel Smith (from left), 15, Connor Gessel, 17, and Austin Carson, 17, work on keeping balloons afloat as they battle the Harlem Globetrotters in one of five competitions.**

## Courting a good cause

**The Harlem Globetrotters joined students at Johnson High School on Thursday for Howard Johnson's third annual Give Happy Challenge Event. Student-athletes chosen by the school challenged members of the Globetrotters to five 60-second challenges unrelated to basketball. Howard Johnson donated \$2,500 to the school as part of the event.**



IMMIGRATION

## Student tuition policy tweaked

By Gary Scharrer

AUSTIN — Undocumented students who pay in-state tuition rates at Texas community colleges and universities will get annual reminders about their obligation to seek legal status in exchange for the break they get.

The Texas Higher Education Board voted unanimously Thursday to tweak the policy that can save students about half the cost of college tuition and fees. Undocumented students who qualify for in-state tuition rates must sign an affidavit pledging to pursue legal status, but there has been no formal follow-up since Texas lawmakers approved the tuition deal in 2001.

Colleges now will be required to formally remind students every year and again when they graduate.

The policy review was already under way before Gov. Rick Perry angered some fellow Republicans during his presidential campaign last fall when he said critics lack a heart if they don't understand the benefits of helping to educate undocumented students. Perry's attitude provoked intense reaction and national attention, said Dominic Chávez, spokesman for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

In Texas, about 16,000 undocumented students take advantage of the in-state tuition rates, including 12,028 at community colleges, according to 2010 statistics, which are the most recent compiled by the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The overall number represents about 1 percent of the enrollment at Texas' public universities and colleges.

Colleges currently collect the affidavits, but it was the lack of follow-up that influenced board members to tweak their rules "to provide greater assurances to Texas taxpayers and the Legislature that both the institutions and the students are ful-

**Tuition continues on B8**

IMMIGRATION

## Comandante, please avoid the Snowbelt next time

*Something we found in Ricardo's email recently. We're investigating.*

**The management.**

Estimado Comandante:  
I write to you from San Antonio, Tejas, serving faithfully as the point of your spear in our continuing efforts at reconquest. (Thank you for that performance evaluation. The bonus is much appreciated).

I regret to inform you that, as occurred during my postings in Milwaukee and in Phoenix, I've been outed as a leader of the advance forces of reconquest. A fifth columnist,



**O. RICARDO PIMENTEL**

if you will. Get it, fifth col . . . oh, never mind.

Some folks have even become privy to our secret code name for the operation: reconquista.

It seems clear: If they know the name for our conspiracy to reclaim the homeland from the Yanqui invader, the jig is up. Again.

May I suggest another name? Operation Multiculturalism? Wait; folks have all kinds of conspiracy theories about that one, too. Operation Diversity? Same problem? I'll work on this one.

Comandante, I have tried through the years — per General Order 6.2, Subsection 3 — to explain that immigration from Mexico very much mimics past migrations. You know, folks with strange surnames

and different cultures come, only to meld into their new country. The argument is lost even on those with those once-foreign surnames.

And I also repeatedly make the point — Subsection 5 — that all this umbrage sounds very much like the outrage that, back in the day, confronted those Italian, German and other European newcomers.

They aren't buying it. Something about illegality. Yeah, right. Before, folks just showed up and were in like Flynn (or Schultz or Molinelli).

People are unmoved to accept my American cred even

after I note my own military service — after, of course, they invoke their own. Some thank me for serving but, somehow, I'm not feeling the love.

Still, Comandante, I continue to believe that making me take four years out of my life to enlist in the Navy in 1973 was genius. How better to learn the enemy's ways? And the G.I. Bill was a stroke of luck, allowing me to infiltrate academia as well. I left the usual cadre of lefty pinkos, of course.

What to do now that we've been exposed here in Texas? Shall I pull all our troops out

**Pimentel continues on B2**