September 27th 2000

Hispanic News

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UCR SCHOLAR, BOOK TO APPEAR AT PRESTIGIOUS MEXICO BOOK FAIR

Alfredo Gonzalez speaking to friends at a surprise reception in his honor at Casa Ramona. Gonzalez remarked on his experiences in the Inland Empire and his appreciation for the warm reception. Photo by IEHN

HATE CRIME ISSUE GAINING LOCAL AND NATIONAL ATTENTION

Don’t forget to Register to Vote before October 10th for information call your local Registrar of Voters

A Publication of the Hispanic Communication & Development Corporation

Wednesday September 27, 2000
Volume 14 Number 02

INLAND EMPIRE HISPANIC NEWS
Serving the Hispanic Communities in the Inland Empire

* San Bernardino • Colton • Rialto • Bloomington • Redlands • Fontana • Rancho Cucamonga • Ontario
* Victor Valley • Riverside • Casa Blanca • Corona

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A hate crime is "any criminal act or attempted criminal act motivated by hatred based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability," as defined in California Penal Code Section 13203. While national hate crime laws are still stuck on the political agenda, waiting to be passed, laws in California have already been devised to protect and punish with regard to hate crimes. Through these new laws, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, teamed with law enforcement throughout the state, promises to "help send a message to those who would commit these crimes of intolerance that we, as a society, will not tolerate such hatred." In short, beating a child near death because his last name is Martinez will carry with it a new brand of consequences and a community-wide intolerance.

Vélez-Ibáñez will attend the prestigious Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara, Mexico Nov. 25 to Dec. 3, 2000 to discuss the Spanish edition of his 1997 book "Border Visions.

The book weaves his family's history, which criss-crosses between Arizona and the Mexican State of Sonora, while also tracing migrations from Mesoamerica to the United States Southwest from pre-European times to the present. "Border Visions" has contributed to a Mexican surge of interest about the border region as evidenced by the author of the prologue to the Spanish version, Carlos Monzón, an internationally recognized Mexican social and literary critic.


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After an hour reminiscing with his many friends, Gonzalez was finally 'dragged' to the stage where Mistress of Ceremonies Esther Estrada, Casa Ramona director and 1° Ward Councilwoman, welcomed him to the community.

Estrada stated that the planning committee wanted a small group of friends to greet the popular announcer instead of a large group. She continued by recalling that in the 1960's and 1970's, Gonzalez had the Mercado del Aire, in which the radio audience would call in to sell chickens, sinks and other miscellaneous items and no person was better suited than Gonzalez to better sell items over the radio.

"Alfredo had his large radio audience laughing with his humorous comments" and she added that he made many serious commentaries beneficial to the community.

Estrada related that when the local school district's board of trustees decided to close westside schools, the President Chair in Anthropology Professor Carlos Velez-Ibanez will attend the prestigious Feria Internacional del Libro in Guadalajara, Mexico

Award-winning University of California, Riverside Presidential Chair in Anthropology Professor Carlos Velez-Ibanez will attend the prestigious Feria Internacional del Libro in Guadalajara, Mexico

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HATE CRIME ISSUE GAINING LOCAL AND NATIONAL ATTENTION

By: Jessica Carney

A year-old, Hesperia boy, trick-or-treating last Halloween, was attacked by white-supremacists who threatened to "kill all Mexicans," while they beat him with golf clubs so badly that he fell into a coma, lost a kidney and nearly lost his liver.

It is clear that this was a crime. But the California Department of Justice defines such an offense as more than a crime. It was, they say, a hate crime.

Of the 1,962 reported hate crimes in California in 1999, 60 percent were motivated by the ethnicity of the victim and 13 percent of the crimes were committed against Hispanic victims, according to a study by the California Department of Justice.
THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT APPOINTS NEW PROGRAM OFFICER FOR SAN DIEGO AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

The California Endowment, the state’s largest health foundation, recently appointed Jose A Marquez, a new program officer, to work with community-based organizations in San Diego, Imperial, San Bernardino and Riverside counties to identify and address their health-related needs. His responsibilities include conducting outreach to organizations to increase their awareness of funding opportunities, reviewing grant proposals from various southern California-based community organizations, developing programs to assist underserved communities, and monitoring foundation grants.

Marquez, who is based at The Endowment’s San Diego office, previously served as the first executive director of the Resource Center for Nonprofit Management which serves Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Prior to that, he was executive director of the San Bernardino National Forest Association. Additionally, Marquez served as executive director of the American Heart Association serving Riverside and San Bernardino counties, and was involved in health care planning and health education programs for 11 years.

“I am proud and privileged to be at The Endowment,” said Marquez. “I look forward to applying my expertise and knowledge of these communities to identify and address their health care needs.”

Marquez is a member of the San Bernardino chapter of the Rotary Club and has received numerous awards for his professional and community activities. He is a graduate of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Social Services.

The California Endowment, the state’s largest health foundation, maintains offices in Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Fresno and San Diego with staff working throughout the state. The mission of the California Endowment is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. The Endowment makes grants to organizations and institutions that directly benefit the health and well-being of the people of California. For more information on The Endowment, visit our web site at www.calendow.org.

APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED FOR STUDENT MEMBER OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Position being filled for the 2001-2002 session

Assemblemember John Longville (D-CA) announced today that the California State Board of Education is accepting applications for a Student Member of the Board for the 2001-2002 Session.

The student member serves as a full voting member of the State Board of Education. As a Member, the student will have an impact on the passage of board policies that will effect the State’s public elementary and secondary schools. Students are required to attend the Boards two-day meetings in Sacramento and special sessions as required.

As a Member all transportation costs will be paid. Lodging and meal costs will be reimbursed in accordance with state regulations. Additionally, the Student Member will receive a $100 stipend for each day’s service on official business.

Applicants must be High School juniors during the 2000-2001 school year so that they will serve as Seniors during the 2001-2002 school year. The deadline for the application package to be completed and postmarked is October 6, 2000. Interested students should contact Enrique R. Acuña, Field Representative, in the district office at 201 North E Street, Suite 205, San Bernardino, CA 92401. The phone number (909) 388-1413.

Assembly member Longville was elected to the California State Assembly in 1998 to represent the 62nd Assembly District. He is currently Chair of the Assembly Committee on Elections, Reapportionment and Constitutional Amendments and member of the Assembly Committees on: Transportation, Governmental Organization, Judiciary and Local Government.
LIEBERMAN ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO PROP 38 - DRAPER SCHOOL VOUCHER INITIATIVE

VP Candidate Tells Los Angeles Times Draper Voucher Initiative Will Hurt Public Schools

Democratic Vice Presidential Nominee Joseph Lieberman voiced his opposition to California's Prop 38. The Draper school voucher initiative in an exclusive interview in the Los Angeles Times. Lieberman, who has supported more limited, targeted voucher proposals in the past, says he opposes California's Draper school voucher initiative because it is to extreme and will abandon California's public schools.

"As I understand this proposition in California, it is not means-tested," Lieberman told the Times. "I can't see how it would not drain the public schools of large amounts of their financial support. That's why I would not support it. Our hope is that we should make our public schools excellent for all of our children, including the poorest children."

Lieberman is yet another voucher supporter who opposes Prop 38 in California. Others include the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, John Coons and Stephen Sugarman of the conservative Pacific Research Institute, and Stanford scholar Terry Moe.

PROP 38 - DRAPER SCHOOL VOUCHER INITIATIVE

The Draper school voucher initiative will:

- Abandon neighborhood schools.
- Cost taxpayers billions of dollars.
- Allow taxpayer-funded schools to discriminate against children based on gender, religion, language, physical or mental disability, and ability to pay.

LATINO VOTE 2000 IN RIVERSIDE

Southwest Voter Registration Project has launched Latino Vote 2000, a campaign to register nearly 1.5 million new Latino voters in 23 states in time for the next presidential election. A successful drive would result in 8 million registered Latino voters, the largest minority voting block in the country. The number of Latino voters increased to over 6.6 million in 1996, making Latinos the population with the most rapid increase in registration and voting numbers in the United States.

The campaign motto is Su Voto Es Su Voz (Your Vote is Your Voice), and its mission is to further the political empowerment of U.S. Latinos.

Persons are reminded that Oct 10 is the last day to register if they are planning to vote in the Nov 7 elections.

The following is a list of venues where persons may register:

- Jurupa Unified School District
  Wednesday, September 27, 5:00 PM
  Riverside Municipal Auditorium

- UCR Mecha Bienvenida
  Wednesday, September 27,
  6:00 - 9:00 PM
  UCR Watkins 1000 787-3821

- Inland Regional Center
  674 Briar Road San Bédino
  Thursday, September 28,
  9:00 - 12:00 PM
  Business Expo, Sponsored by Mexican Council

SCE AGAIN RANKS AMONG TOP COMPANIES FOR LATINAS

For the second straight year, Southern California Edison (SCE) ranks as one of America's "50 best companies for Latinas to work for the U.S."

According to a report in the August/September issue of LATINA Style Magazine.

Approximately 600 U.S. corporations were evaluated for the report. SCE, an Edison International company, was the only electric utility ranked among the magazine's top 50 companies, which were not given a numerical ranking on the list.

Companies were evaluated based upon issues identified by LATINA Style as most important to its readers, among them a company's number of Latina executives, mentoring programs, Latinos on the board of directors, educational opportunities, benefits, and women's issues.

For SCE, the LATINA Style distinction comes on the heels of another high ranking. The July 10, 2000, issue of Fortune magazine ranked SCE as one of America's "50 best companies for minorities," for the third straight year.

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Works (Department) is seeking the professional services of an aerial and photogrammetric firm to provide aerial photography and prepare digital topographic mapping of Ft. Irwin Road.

To reach the Latino Vote 2000 Riverside and volunteer please contact 696.VOTE (8683) or email svreDriv@oacbell.net.

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS/proposal to PROVIDE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND PREPARE DIGITAL TOPOGRAPHIC MAPPING OF FT. IRWIN ROAD

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Works (Department) is seeking the professional services of an aerial and photogrammetric firm to provide aerial photography and prepare digital topographic mapping of Ft. Irwin Road.

The limits of the work will extend from Interstate 15 to the Ft. Irwin boundary, a distance of approximately 32 miles along Ft. Irwin Road. The mapping requirements will include interpreting approximately 100 one-foot contour interval models, for the limits specified above at 600 ft. total width centered on the roadway, as delineated on the enclosed exhibit. The Department will supply surveying, with controls targeted for analytical accuracy.

Films with demonstrated experience in aerial topography and mapping projects as described above are encouraged to respond to the Request for Qualifications/Proposal. In order to receive a copy of the RFP, please call (909) 387-7938. The deadline for the Department's receipt of the proposal is 4:00 p.m., October 12, 2000.
UCR SCHOLAR, BOOK TO APPEAR AT PRESTIGIOUS MEXICO BOOK FAIR

Continued from Page 1

The English language edition received the National Association of University Librarians' "Choice" award for Outstanding Academic Book in Social and Behavioral Sciences for 1997.

The book's presentation at the Guadalajara book fair is a confirmation of its impact on Latin American and Iberian authors. The books presented are by invitation only.

"Border Visions" details how Spanish colonists used ancient Native-American trade routes and established towns stretching north from Southern Mexico to the present-day states of New Mexico and later Arizona, Texas and California. This occurred about the time English colonists were getting a foothold on America's eastern seaboard. Those routes, which connected Mexico and the U.S. Southwest culturally and economically, are still used, he said.

"The book in Mexico has taken off, mostly because people there didn't know this," Velez-Ibanez said. The ongoing connections between Mexico and the U.S. Southwest have been maintained by the continuous flow in both directions of commerce, culture, and people across the region. That flow has blurred the traditional visions of the international boundary, an artificial concept, the book contends.

Velez-Ibanez used materials from a variety of disciplines to document the "search for cultural space and place" of ancient and contemporary Mexicans in the border region. He hopes the book may help shape public policy. It is being read in the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry and in Mexican Consular offices in the U.S., he said. "I hope that their U.S. counterparts do the same."

Velez-Ibanez has received numerous outstanding national awards. Most recently, he was awarded the Presidential Chair in Anthropology at UCR July. Selected in 1997 as one of the 100 most influential Hispanic in the U.S. by Hispanic Business, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City in February; and was the Visiting Scholar at the UC, San Diego Center for U.S. Mexico Studies in 1999-2000. He was formally a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford in 1994-95. Carlos Velez-Ibanez can be reached at (909) 787-5018. He can be reached by e-mail at carlos.velez@ucr.edu.

COME HOME TO THE HOME

Serving the Community Since 1922

The Home of Neighborly Service, 839 N. Mt Vernon Avenue, announced the opening of its Homework Assistance Center, an expansion of the Home" ongoing after school program.

The new Homework Center Program is a collaboration between the city of Readers, Arrowhead Credit Union and the Home of Neighborly Service.

Computers and Software have been donated by the Arrowhead Credit Union. The City of Readers will provide liaison between the Home and the San Bernardino City Unified School District.

Middle School Students are the focus of the program; however, elementary students are also welcome, excluding pre-schoolers. Students can participate for assistance with homework and tutoring in specific subject areas.

The Center will be open from 3:00 to 6:00 PM. Monday thru Thursday to begin with, and will perhaps extend hours as needs are indicated.

Students register when they first attend and will be scheduled for specific times and days. Parents are urged to attend the first session with their children to sign the necessary permission forms. Call for further information the Home at (909) 885-3491.

RAPE CRISIS CENTER TO EXPAND SERVICES: SPANISH SELF DEFENSE CLASS

The Rape Crisis Center will be sponsoring its first Self-Defense class offered in Spanish to the community. The Class will be taught by Maria Evans, who has 35 years of Martial Arts experience resulting in 5 black belts.

What: A two-part training basic self-defense class
When: October 21st and October 28th
When: YWCA located at 8172 Magnolia Ave. Riverside, CA
Time: 12:00PM to 4:00PM
Contact: Rebecca M. Meléndez (909) 686-7273

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The Kiwanis Club of Greater San Bernardino held its 32nd Annual Installation of awards for its community service on September 16, 2000. Pictured, I to r, are newly installed officers: Jess Vizcaino, President, Reyes (Rocket) Rios, President-elect, Marie Arakaki, Vice-president, Terri Bishop, Treasurer, Manuel Hernandez, Secretary and Joe Rodriguez, Immediate Past President. The Kiwanis Club is one of the most active service organizations in the Cal-Neva District and is the recipient of a large number of awards for its community service.

Bill Torres, left, National Gas Vehicle Training and Support Manager, The Gas Company, orienta Magdaleno Gonzalez, Grand Terrace resident, with a natural gas-powered F-150 Ford Truck on Tuesday, September 5. Gonzalez was selected from more than 15,500 contest entrants to win use of the top-of-the-line truck for five million meters (equivalent to 3,000 miles) or three months, whichever comes first.

The contest was sponsored by the Gas Company as a way of saying thanks to its customers. Contestants registered to win use of one of three natural gas vehicles (NGVs), including the Ford Truck, a Honda Civic GX and a Toyota Camry. Three winners were chosen in mid-August.

Winning use of the natural gas-powered truck also means that Gonzalez, who works for a La Puente-based company and faces a 35-mile roundtrip commute on the 60 FWY each day, will now be able to decrease the time he spends on the road.

NGV’s burn cleaner than their gasoline counterparts, emitting up to 95 percent less pollution. Cheaper fuel and lower maintenance costs also make them more economical. For the past 18 months, fuel for NGVs has averaged around $1.10 for a gasoline gallon equivalent, compared to upwards of $1.60 and rising per gallon of gasoline. This works out to a savings of $5 or more with each fill up.

In addition, natural gas’ octane rating of 130, compared with the 87 to 92 rating of gasoline, ensures that NGVs have as much power and efficiency as standard cars.

Southern California Gas Company is the nation’s largest natural gas distribution utility, serving more than 18 million people through 5 million meters. The company’s service territory encompasses more than 23,000 square miles throughout central and Southern California.

Postal Inspectors announced today that Hispanic homeowners are recent targets of fraud involving home loans. According to spokesperson Terry L. Thome, it is believed that over 2,200 individuals were mailed Spanish letters indicating that their home loan had been transferred and to redirect payments starting September 1 to a new Los Angeles address.

The letters specifically targeted Hispanics by stating, “Para Nuestros Clientes De Habla Hispana.” The letters stated that incentive programs consisting of free financing would be offered, especially for Hispanic families.

Thome advised that Postal Inspectors have identified at least two banks, First Federal Bank of California and Washington Mutual Bank, whose customers received the letters. Banks are encouraged to send a fraud alert to their customers warning of the recent scam. Losses and number of victims are undetermined.

Consumers should be wary if they receive any letter in the mail advising that their home loan service is changing. Beware of form letters that do not include a date, old loan number or name of the former loan institution. Thome suggests contacting the original lender to verify the legitimacy of the notification letter. Loan institutions normally notify customers using their official letterhead if any changes are anticipated.

Other tips include contacting the “new” lender by telephone to obtain names and additional information. If you insist on sending money to the new company, use certified mail and do not send cash.

Anyone believed to be a victim of this scheme should immediately contact his or her lending institution. Victims of any type of mail fraud can report it to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Southern California Division at (626) 405-1200.

DAVIS COMMITTEE RELEASES POLL CONFIRMING BIG GORE LEAD IN STATE

A survey completed for Gov. Gray Davis’ political committee shows Vice President Al Gore continues to enjoy a solid lead among California voters over Texas Gov. George W. Bush: Al Gore 49; George Bush 36; Ralph Nader 5; Pat Buchanan 1.

Don’t know 9

Gore’s margin in the Davis poll mirrors the most recent Field Poll, which gave the vice president an identical 13-point lead, 50-37. That survey was conducted Aug. 18-22, right after the Democratic National Convention concluded in Los Angeles.

“I hope Bush keeps coming to California spending his precious time and resources,” said Garry South, senior political adviser to Davis and an adviser to the Gore campaign in California, noting that the Republican nominee begins another multi-day trip to California on Wednesday. “We haven’t even gotten started on him yet on the issues of a woman’s right to choose, guns and the environment, and Bush still can’t muster 40 percent in any poll.”

Conducted by Davis’ pollster, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, the survey is based on telephone interviews with a representative statewide sample of 800 likely voters Sept. 3-10.

The margin of sampling error for the poll is +/3 percent.

Save and Secure

Not only does security lighting pay to keep your business safe at night, it can also pay you cash.

Through Riverside Public Utilities’ Outdoor Security Lighting Program, qualified business customers can receive annual incentives up to $500 for replacing older inefficient security lighting with new energy efficient fixtures.

Your business will be able to offset the costs of purchasing the new lighting and benefit from reduced energy consumption and lower electric bills.

For more information on the Outdoor Security Lighting Program, contact a Business Development Representative today at (909) 826-5485.
Alfredo Figueroa of Blythe, California a long time activist.

He wears many hats, but has just one name: Alfredo Figueroa. You may have heard of Alfredo Figueroa, the driftwood stone miner who owned and operated a quarry in Blythe, CA, continuing a six-generation legacy started by his Indigenous-Chicano ancestors on the Colorado River Indian Reservation.

As a political coordinator for the Mexican-American Political Association and the Democratic Party, Alfredo Figueroa may have come to your door, persuading you to register and vote. Maybe you witnessed Alfredo Figueroa’s efforts to assist the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, working along Cesar Chavez as a labor organizer for the Coachella Valley.

Perhaps you’ve read about Alfredo Figueroa the community leader and civil rights activist who started the first private school to help Chicano farm worker children learn about their heritage.

You may hum historical, cultural songs performed by Alfredo Figueroa the folkloric singer and guitarist.

While Alfredo’s life story is as complex as it is spirited, it is far from over.

A fiery man at age 66, Alfredo lives in Blythe, CA with his wife Demesia and their nine children, 22 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Alfredo has dedicated his life to two goals: Searching to uncover the history of his native land and of his cultural heritage; And cultivating the history of his native land and of his people.

Demesia and their nine children, 22
lives in Blythe, CA with his wife
over.

While Blythe is a town dominated
wealthy growers - who are the
major employers in the area - and
immigrant farm workers, racial ten-
sions abound. Alfredo knew self-suf-
ciency was the best reprieve, but he
did not stop fighting for those who
needed him.

Labor rises up

In 1960, Alfredo joined the Agri-
cultural Worker Organizing Commit-
tee (AWOC) lettuce strike as a vol-
unteer organizer. The motive was to
organize the union and expose the
unjust treatment of workers.

The AWOC was striving for bet-
ter working conditions and basic em-
ployment necessities. Finally, in De-
cember of 1964, public law was passed
to abolish the slave-like working con-
ditions for the immigrant laborers.

In 1965 Alfredo joined forces with United Farm Workers Association leader Cesar Chavez, where he organized campesinos to fight for their rights as farm workers and their need for the union to protect them.

While working with Chavez, Alfredo was brutally beaten by two police officers inside a Blythe restaurant.

Four years later, in 1967, Alfredo became the first Chicano to win a political brutality lawsuit in California against the Blythe Police Department. His case became a cause celebre in the Civil Rights Movement and appeared in the 1970 publication of the "Mexican Americans and the Administra-

Minorities enter the political arena

Putting his ideals into action, Alfredo organized his community and provided people with information to build what he hoped would be a "strong and politically conscious group of people ready to combat the undermin-
ing and destructive forces within so-
ociety, forces that have kept La Raza and other minorities out of the politi-
cal arena for so many years."

Rallying behind Robert Kennedy in 1968, Alfredo headed a group of Chicanos to elect Kennedy for presi-
dent. Active in the Democratic Party, Alfredo actively promoted registration and voting along with his wife, the first Chicana to register to vote in Blythe.

"Seventy million people didn’t vote in the last election," asserts Alfredo. "All they need is a little push to understand the circumstances."

So that the voices of his people would be heard, Alfredo served as the coordinator for the Mexican-American Political Association from 1963 through 1973.

Since 1960, MAPA has been dedi-
cated to the constitutional and demo-
cratic principle of political freedom and representation for the Mexican and Hispanic people of the United States.

"Only by penetrating the system can we move our issues to the top of the agenda. That is why Latinos and Latinas across the country must claim a place in the political arena," "touts MAPA’s website.

And Alfredo agrees: "MAPA helps with all the things we are fighting for," he said.

Through his involvement in MAPA and the country’s Housing Urban Development grants, Alfredo and his brothers were able to secure the de-
velopment of water and sewer ser-
ties for their neighborhood, Barrio Cuchillo. They also worked to build 100 new homes for low-income fami-
lies in their barrio.

A school for the people

In 1972, a student at Blythe Middle School was physically grabbed and thrown out of a classroom by the school’s principal for holding a MECHA Club meeting. That student, Alfredo’s daughter, led her brother, sister and 100 other Chicanos to a walkout in protest of the public school system’s unfair treatment of Chicano

While Alfredo was in Los Ange-
les working at the United Farm Work-
ers boycott, his children were running a four-week picket line in front of the school. By the fifth week, the students were attending classes at the local park, taught by sympathetic teachers and students from the University of California, Riverside and California State University, San Bernardino.

The 1972 pickets and eventual les-
sions in the park led to Alfredo’s for-
mation of Escuela De La Raza Unida, the school where all nine of Alfredo and Demesia’s children graduated.

"You can have more intensity and more impact on the students here," explained Raymond Maestas, a UCR graduate and teacher of Spanish and government classes for the Escuela De La Raza Unida. "You give the students more pride because you teach them their culture and their history and at the same time you gave the American perspective."

Alfredo concurred: "To make it in this culture, you have to have an education."

Musica, musica

Sifting through photos, flyers, books and newspaper clippings, Alfredo unravels his life’s work, dedicated to civil rights. Through it all, Alfredo’s companion has been his guitar.

At speeches, marches, celebra-
tions and ceremonies, Alfredo has played his guitar and belted his songs in the name of La Raza.

Continue on Page 10
WORKING WITHIN A SYSTEM THAT DID NOT WORK FOR HIM: MIGUEL FIGUEROA.

By: Jessica Carney

Miguel Figueroa and his wife, Elisa, will be celebrating 50 years of marriage in June 1, 2001. Figueroa, recently retired from the Postal Service, has been actively involved in civil rights and community affairs since the late 1940's in the Blythe area, and specifically fighting the internal abuses within the Post Office.

"Can you guess where this picture was taken?" asks Miguel Figueroa, revealing a well-preserved photograph of a 1937 kindergarten class.

The faces of thirty Hispanic children and one African American smiled into the camera as they made up the entire class. A reasonable answer would be that the picture was taken in Mexico.

"This was taken in Blythe, California," says Miguel wryly. "It was called the American School. The government was trying to 'Americanize' the minorities. My mom refused to enroll me there."

Miguel's mother, Elisa, a true native of Arizona, a member of the Chemehuevi tribe, knew the experience of being 'Americanized' and did not want that for her children.

"Back then you just didn't have much of a chance," explains Miguel. "From what I've seen in the growth of youngsters that are segregated is that you stunt their growth."

From his earliest childhood memories to his most recent, Miguel has looked into the face of discrimination and, on all accounts, he has not flinched. On a path taken mainly by white people - education and civil service - Miguel moved along despite efforts to hold him back.

A rocky road to success

When his family moved from Arizona to Blythe, Miguel was advanced from the fourth-grade to the seventh-grade because of his academic level. His interest in education continued through high school and developed into plans to attend Palm Desert College with hopes of transferring to California State University at San Jose.

Working to save money for the tuition at California State University at San Jose, Miguel took a job with the post office in 1950.

While Miguel is very proud of his father, a native of Sonora, Mexico who started a still-flourishing mining business, he did not follow in his father's footsteps the way his brothers did. Three of Miguel's brothers spent their lives mining and one brother died in a mining accident.

"I'd see the fear that my mom went through every time those bells would ring to signal an accident in the mine," said Miguel, recalling how the women in the mining town would grab their rosaries and begin to pray every time the news came that there was trouble in the mine. "I saw too much of that and I hated to get too close to a mine."

Since Miguel's job at the post office was supposed to be reserved for war veterans, Miguel says he really had to work hard to keep his job. Miguel worked in the post office and his political activism, including membership in the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, helped him round up fellow postal employees to get involved in the union.

"Everybody was afraid to join a union back then, in the days of McCarthy," recalls Miguel. "But we didn't want to be regular employees, not temporary. We wanted due compensation and overtime."

For the charter meeting, Miguel helped round up fellow postal employees to get involved in the union. At the age of 20, Miguel was unanimously chosen for president of the Blythe chapter of the union and awarded with a copy of the much-prized Postal Rules and Regulations Book.

By his celebrating was short-lived. The next day at work the Postmaster accused Miguel of being a communist and because it was the time of the Red Scare this was cause to fire him on the spot.

After toiling and deliberating with the Blythe post office, the union, and federal government regulators for one year, Miguel was reinstated and compensated for his lost wages.

Short-lived vindication

By January of 1953, Miguel, then just 21-years-old, was promoted to Postmaster and officially became the youngest Postmaster in the U.S. Despite his prominent position, Miguel said he was excluded from membership in the Rotary or Lion's clubs and the Republican Party because of his Mexican heritage.

Miguel became active in the Democratic Party and worked with his brother Alfredo to motivate Chicanos to vote locally and nationally. At Blythe City Hall, Miguel and Alfredo successfully rallied the townspeople to lobby for water and sewer improvements in Blythe.

"I couldn't ignore the problems and social injustices. I became something pretty important among Chicanos circles," explains Miguel.

Unfortunately, Miguel said, the respect he earned in Chicanos circles was not paid to him by his fellow postal workers. "In my two years as postmaster I received seven inspections per year. The normal amount is one or two. They were trying to find fault with my leadership."

When fraudulent claims were made about his management of postal operations, Miguel was again fired. Copious court battles and the help of Robert Kennedy in Washington, D.C. again restored him to his post. After the civil rights movement of the 1960's, the social climate in the U.S. changed so much so that Miguel was brought in by the Western Regional Postmaster to serve as a trouble-shooter for labor relations in 1970. Miguel stayed with the post office until he retired in 1982.

Life lessons learned

Miguel insists that there is a lesson to be learned from his experience that exceeds awareness of racism.

"The reasons Chicanos are in the state we're in now is because of no education, very little money and not fighting for what we want. I knew I was never going to rest until I had no strength. Although his work with the postal office and his political activism, including work as the southern area director for the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and collaboration with Cesar Chavez on labor union lobbying, has taken him away from home, Miguel maintains that his first love and first priority has always been his family.

Miguel has been married to his wife Eloisa for 50 years. Together they raised five boys and two girls. Their oldest son Mike graduated from Azlan University and now works in construction in Blythe. Their son Cuashtemo is working for the Al Gore campaign in New Mexico. Their son Alfredo heads the Hispanic studies program at the University of California, Riverside while their son Joe Richard works as a correction officer at a state prison near Fresno. Daughter Adrian is a homemaker in Blythe and daughter Sylvia is a caseworker for a teen pregnancy center. Their youngest son Lazaro is in law school in San Francisco.

Working to educate Hispanics

Since his retirement from the post office, Miguel has worked as the Valley Verde School District community resource officer, lobbying in Sacramento for school issues. Miguel says he has helped the district overcome disorganization of nine schools as well as a lot of problems with guns, drugs, delinquencies, truancies and misfit students.

He also helps recruit Hispanic students for UCR with the belief that education can alleviate poor social status.

"When you're poor, the only answer to your success is education and you don't have to be rich to have a good mind."

SEASONAL HELP

JOB FAIRS OFFER HOLIDAY JOBS

Put a paycheck under your tree this holiday season! The County of San Bernardino Jobs & Employment Services Department has three seasonal help job fairs scheduled for Saturday, October 7, 2000. Held at the Inland Center Mall in San Bernardino, the mall offers a wide variety of employers looking for extra help to get through the holiday rush. Employers will be on hand to discuss a variety of employment opportunities from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at all three mall locations.

Job seekers are encouraged to dress appropriately and to bring a resume or master application with their pertinent information. Don't miss the chance to cash in on a great job through the holidays and make your season a little brighter! For more information, contact the County of San Bernardino, Jobs & Employment Services Department at 714-688-4511 or visit their website at www.jesd.com.
SEMENA DE MEXICO SCHEDULED FOR HISPANIC MONTH

The Consul de Mexico Juan Jose Salgado, in conjunction with the City of San Bernardino and Inland Empire Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has announced a celebration of La Semana de Mexico scheduled for Monday, September 28th and Friday, September 29th, 2000.

On Thursday, September 28th, the Sinfonia Mexicana Society held its 15th Anniversary Installation of Officers Dinner at the Arrowhead Country Club, San Bernardino with Mary Zaneski, Director-External Affairs, Pacific Bell as Mistress of Ceremonies. Pictured above, (r to l) Mexican Consul Juan Jose Salgado, installing officer, and new officers: Tony Bocanegra, President, Jesse Valenzuela, Vice President, Robin Cochran, Secretary, Glendy Avila, Treasurer and Maria Lopez, Historian.

The Sinfonia Mexicana Society, at its 15th Anniversary Installation of Officers Dinner, honored Jerry Bean for initiating a committee in 1985 to produce and present Mexican classical symphonies to the region, the committee now known as the Sinfonia Mexicana Society. Esther Mata, right, representing the SMS, presented a plaque and resolution to Bean for his contribution to SMS. Congressman Joe Baca, Senator Neil Soto and Bea Cortez, representing Assemblyman John Langville also presented Bean with resolutions.

Refugio (Ernie) Gomez was honored by the Sinfonia Mexicana Society at its 15th Anniversary Installation of Officers Dinner for 50 years in the music profession, as teacher, organizer of the Canto Bello Chorale and volunteer choir director in his parish. Mary Chavez, at right, presented the plaque for the SMS.

FIESTA DE LA FAMILIA - RIVERSIDE, SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 7TH

The press-Enterprise will present its third annual Fiesta de la Familia event on Saturday, October 7 in Riverside’s Fairmont Park from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The event is a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The Fiesta features live entertainment on four stages, children’s activities, fine art and handcrafted items, a health fair, food booths, commercial displays and information on educational opportunities and programs. There is no charge for admission or parking.

Fiesta (Main) stage performers scheduled to date include Lalo Guerrero, Little Joe y La Familia, Yesenia Flores, Caravana, and the Susie Hansen Latin Band. Other stages will feature folklorico dance groups, animal shows and cooking demonstrations. A salsa dance contest for adults and a soccer contest for children will also be featured.

More than 80 vendor booths will be on site representing local nonprofit organizations, restaurants, schools and businesses. Fiesta-goers can enjoy freshly prepared food, shop for handcrafted items, get information from local businesses and select from a variety of health screenings. Free pony rides, train rides and a petting zoo will also be on hand.

For additional information about the Fiesta de la Familia, call (909) 320-7811 or visit the event website, www.fiestadelafamilia.com.

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POPULAR ANNOUNCER AND ACTIVIST RECEIVES SURPRISE WELCOME

Continued from Page 1

Inland Empire Hispanic News

Alfredo Gonzalez, popular radio announcer and community activist, was greeted at a surprise welcoming reception at Casa Ramona. Approximately 75 friends became reacquainted with Gonzalez after an absence of six years from the Inland Empire. Photo by IEHN

Alfredo Gonzalez poses with Frances Ramirez, a member of the planning committee, at the surprise reception for the popular radio announcer. Photo by IEHN

The Latino Impact, a political action committee, is inviting the public to an “Amigos de Jerry Eaves” reception to be held on Tuesday, October 3, 2000 at the Gents Community Center, 1462 Art Townsend Drive, San Bernardino, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. Food, music and entertainment will be available. Individual admission is $25 and sponsorship is $250. Make checks payable to Latino Impact, L.D.#4901353, 1558, N. Waterman Ave., Ste. D, San Bernardino, CA 92404. No cash. RSVP (909) 381-6259 by Monday, October 2nd. For Information Call (909)381-6259

COUNTY SUPERVISORS AND THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION HOSTING A SBA LOAN SEMINAR FOR VETERANS.

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, along with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are sponsoring a “Veteran’s Pre-Qualification SBA Loan Seminar.” This free financial seminar is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18, 2000, 5:30 PM. At the Jerry L. Petit Memorial VA Medical Center – at the Auditorium (first floor), 11201 Benton Street in Loma Linda, CA.

This event will help veterans-owned businesses by providing them with a “one-stop” seminar to learn step-by-step the pre-qualification SBA loan process, the participation of the County of San Bernardino as a SBA Intermediary Pre-Qualification Loan Provider, and about other government below-market interest rate to start or expand a business.

There is no cost to attend but immediate registration is required. Please REGISTER immediately by calling the County of San Bernardino Office of Small Business Development at (909) 387-8279
MALDEF REGIONAL COUNSEL THOMAS A. SAENZ RECEIVES 2000 JACK BERMAN AWARD FOR ACHIEVEMENT FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC

State Bar of California/California Young Lawyers Association

Proposition 187, the anti-immigrant initiative that would have denied virtually all public services to undocumented immigrants. Its defeat was a major victory for the entire Latino community.

Born and raised in Southern California, Saenz is a summa cum laude graduate of Yale University, from which he also received his law degree. He also teaches a course in civil rights litigation each spring at the University of Southern California Law Center. Saenz was also recently recognized as one of five local Heroes of the Year 2000 for Hispanic Heritage Month by KCET-TV and Union Bank of California.

The Jack Berman Award is presented annually to a young lawyer (first five years of active State Bar membership or age 36 and under) who has provided outstanding service to the legal profession and public, and dedication to issues of concern to new and young lawyers.

The award was presented at a reception during the State Bar Annual Meeting in San Diego, California.

A national organization, MALDEF promotes and protects the civil rights of Latinos through advocacy, community education and outreach, leadership development, higher education scholarships and, when necessary, through the legal system.

NORTE VISTA, LA SIERRA STUDENTS WIN RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES’ ART CONTEST

Jennifer Wardle of Norte Vista High School and Jeremy Barrigan of La Sierra High School were chosen as the winners of Riverside Public Utilities’ (RPU) Second Annual Bottled Water Label Art Contest.

The art contest was held in conjunction with the RPU’s Splash Into Cash water giveaway program for local high schools. The Splash into Cash program offers Riverside high schools free bottled water which can be used to support school events or be sold to help raise funds for school programs.

Riverside Public Utilities will give away over 19,500 bottles of water to help support the high schools this year.

Winners for the art contest were chosen in two categories: General Art, Warde; and Riverside’s Citrus Heritage, Barrigan. Each student will receive $50 and a special recognition certificate given out by Riverside’s Board of Public Utilities at their meeting September 15. Additionally, each student’ artwork will be featured on 10,000 bottles of water to be used in the Splash into Cash giveaway this year.

The Utility will also honor La Sierra’s art teacher Jeff Ribaudo and Norte Vista’s art teacher Diane Gritton with $50 gift certificates to a local art supply store.

Riverside Public Utilities is a consumer-owned water and electric utility which provides services to over 90,000 customers within the city of Riverside.

SEEKING SOCIAL JUSTICE FROM ALL ANGLES: ALFREDO FIGUEROA

By: Jessica Carney
Continued from Page 6

He even took his songs to perform before the National Park Service and Smithsonian Institute Festival of American Folklore in 1976.

Alfredo’s songs tell the tales of his heritage, a heritage he continues to seek through genealogy work and research.

The peace and dignity journey In 1998, Alfredo began an effort he named the Peace and Dignity Journey, along with the help of the Colorado River Native Nations Alliance, the Indigenous Native People’s Alliance and the Save Ward Valley Coalition.

On board a bus adorned with protest banners and running alongside, protestors traveled 340 miles to try to halt the proposed nuclear dump, located 18 miles from the Colorado River.

“The prayers from these runs continue with the struggle we face as indigeneous peoples,” read a peace and dignity journey pamphlet. “The Ward Valley Run is a culmination of the prayer that began in 1992 to bring unity, to bring peace and dignity, to defend and protect our sacred mother earth and to bring hope to future generations.”

While the 1998 journey successfully made their objective, Alfredo and his son Jose carry on the journey, this year, venturing from Alaska to Blythe. Alfredo and Jose say the journey is a spiritual, cultural and historical tradition.

Alfredo says his mission exceeds national boundaries as his struggle relates to uniting humanity: “Nationalism is a thing of the past. If we are going to have progress ... they are going to have to knock down fences down, La Raza means the human race. Among all, we do all for the benefit of all.”

Simple Steps to Savings

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For more information on energy conservation, contact Riverside Public Utilities Marketing Communications at 909-826-5518 or visit our website at www.ci.riverside.ca.us/utilities.
Hate Crime Issue

Inland Empire Hispanic News

Wednesday, September 27, 2000

HATE CRIME ISSUE GAINING LOCAL AND NATIONAL ATTENTION

By: Jessica Carney

Continued from Page 1

Mary Figueroa, Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees member and Attorney General’s Civil Rights Commission on Hate Crime member, was a panel speaker at the recent Hate Crime hearings in Riverside. Figueroa was a previous member of the Riverside Human Relations Commission and serves on numerous community boards. Photo by IEHN

Residents of San Bernardino and Riverside counties gathered Thursday, September 14 at the Riverside County Office of Education to discuss the issue with the State of California Attorney General’s Civil Rights Commission on Hate Crimes and the Human Rights Commissions of the Cities of Riverside and San Bernardino.

Rosales says the Human Rights Commissions are working with the Mexican Consulate, Hispanic organizations and local Spanish radio stations to provide information on how to report hate crimes.

“We have to provide support to the victims,” says Mary Figueroa, a member of the Attorney General’s Civil Rights Commission on Hate Crimes. “Many are reticent to law enforcement. They are hesitant to bring attention to not being documented immigrants. We have to say, ‘it’s okay to come forward and it’s not your fault.’”

She added: “Let’s now take this message out to the individual agencies. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and those agencies that have contact with the Hispanic community.”

San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department Deputy Tony Hernandez (left) and Community Liaison Norman Nuñez, representing the Public Affairs Office, listen to speakers and comments during the Hate Crime Hearings in the City of Riverside. Photo by IEHN

After his son was beaten seven times by Arian-nation gangs, Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) national vice president Steven Figueroa said he knew he had to get behind the hate crime awareness movement.

“Hate crimes occur in many ways. We have to be vigilant,” Steven Figueroa warned the crowd. “It’s bad. It was worse. We hope that with continued dialogue it will get better.”

With a promise to put his law enforcement team behind the new hate crime mandates, Riverside County’s Undersheriff Bob Doyle pledged, “to eradicate hate crimes, increase awareness, reporting and prosecution.”

“We hope the human aspect of putting a face with a badge will make it easier for people to report hate crimes,” he continued. “Hated and prejudice cannot be tolerated in our communities and it will not be tolerated by our sheriff’s department.”

Law enforcement joined the effort to reduce hate crime in March of this year when they teamed up with the City of Riverside Human Resources Department to form the West Inland Empire Coalition Against Hate (WIECAH), according to Rosales who serves on the committee.

“We have now developed a network in the Inland Empire set up to educate the public,” explained Rosales. “Now our second phase is to work with the various school districts in this area. Our third phase will be to develop protocols for community-based organizations like Rape-Crisis centers and groups that deal with minorities to let the people know what a hate crime is and to encourage victims to report it. We want to establish community-based organizations as support groups for victims of hate crimes.”

Thursday’s forum was just the beginning, says Rosales. WIECAH will hold more forums at the local level as well as forums for grade school students.

“We know that the more you provide information, the more they will know how to access the information, how to help victims and how to notify the authorities.”

Steve Figueroa, left, MAPA representative and Alfredo Figueroa, UCR Chicano Student Studies director, listened to panel members and audience commentaries at the recent Hate Crime Hearing in Riverside. Photo by IEHN

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