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Hispanic News

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Welcome Home: Desert Storm Soldier

Publisher's note: The American public has recently witnessed arrival of troops from the Desert Storm War and soldiers have received numerous homecoming receptions. The Inland Empire Hispanic News has exclusively interviewed one of its returning veterans from Desert Storm.

Lieutenant Ron Casillas arrived at San Bernardino Street in a stretch limousine followed by a caravan of decorated cars and relatives, neighbors and friends standing by the side of the street, waving American flags, yellow bows and signs of welcome and shouting greetings of "welcome home" and "job well done" to a very astonished soldier.

There were unashamed tears of joy by many who had, for weeks, anticipated the arrival of the young serviceman and were very anxious to personally greet him. None of the greeters were more anxious to greet him than two individuals, Grandmothers Conception "Concha" Casillas and Catarina "Katie" Guzman. Showering their grandson with tears of joy and big emotional hugs, the grandmothers refused to release him to others wishing to greet him. Eventually, adults and children were able to greet the young serviceman with the same affection.

A couple of hours later, after sampling a variety of delicious Mexican food, (he stated that during his tenure overseas, he had gone through a withdrawal period from not indulging in Mexican food), Lt. Casillas was able to relax in his Grandmother's living room to be interviewed.

Lt. Casillas was reunited with his family, friends and neighbors on his return from duty in Kuwait.

Coalition Presents Re-Districting Plan

The California Legislative Senate Committee on Elections and Reapportionment, with Senator Milton Marks as Committee Chairperson, met at the Country Government Center on Friday, April 5, to hear testimony and recommendations from groups and individuals throughout the County of San Bernardino regarding future realignment of congressional, senatorial and assembly districts.

Approximately 35 persons, the majority representing elected, political, labor, women and minority organizations presented testimony expressing concerns with previous 1982 redistricting, voicing recommendations to the forthcoming redistricting which will be developed by the legislators and governor in 1992.

The Coalition For Fair Representation, a project of the Institute For Social Justice, presented an in-depth plan which included recommendations for congressional, senatorial and assembly redistricting. Dr. Armando Navarro, Institute Director and a principle architect of the Coalition, presented an overview of reapportionment in California. Dr. Navarro stressed the fact that minorities will be the majority in year 2000 and See Coalition Page 5

U.S. Army Lt. Ron Casillas is astonished by the tumultuous "Welcome Home" he received from family, friends and neighbors on his return from duty in Kuwait.

In February, 1991, the platoon went on excursions into Kuwait and eventually were able to enter Kuwait City. The platoon's main responsibility was to identify chemical and biological stock piles. "Entering Kuwait, we saw the devastation that our air raids had done. There were many casualties and tanks, vehicles and motorized units that were completely demolished and other units were abandoned. The scene was very gruesome," he said.

On March 5, the unit was notified that it was returning to the United States. "We thought that someone was pulling our leg, because we were under the impression that our unit would be in Saudi for one year or longer. But we didn't argue. To be able to have a hot shower and eat good food, that was heaven."

Continued with more photos on page 4
**Downtown Gran Fiesta Set for May 2**

Gran Fiesta!
On May 2, 1991, in City Hall Plaza, downtown, San Bernardino there will be a pre-Cinco de Mayo celebration sponsored by the El Camino Real Cultural and Economic Foundation along with Main Street, Inc., the Sun News paper, the City of San Bernardino and several Hispanic community organizations to include the Hispanic Roundtable.

The event will feature mariachis, ballet folklorico, street vendors selling Mexican artifacts, an art exhibit and special presentations by members of the community. The event will be all day and will receive live coverage by Radio KDFI and KGKI. A special part of the program will be 5th and 6th grade posters submitted by students from San Bernardino Unified School District and the Colton Unified School District, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners as well as ribbon winners having their poster art displayed. The theme of the contest is “Sharing our Culture”.

Organizers are still accepting applications for food booth vendors and individuals wishing to sell artifacts such as jewelry, clothing and flowers, all in the spirit of Mexican culture and “fiestas patrias”. Individuals should call (714) 825-8123 for additional information.

**EDITORIAL: Council Gangs Up on Hernandez**

No one ever said getting elected to public office is easy. But who would suspect that after a successful campaign, things would get worse.

Recently, the City Council effectively excluded Ralph Hernandez, third ward councilman-elect from key committees by reappointing themselves to vacancies created as a result of Councilman Jess Flores committee resignations, who will be replaced by Mr. Hernandez in June.

One can try to understand and sympathize with Flores’ motives. As a one term incumbent, no doubt, he had many plans and visions for the future if elected. As stated in our February 27 editorial, “Mr. Flores has been a professional throughout his governmental career...His additional activities are pertinent to the problems facing the community.” To speculate that Flores initiated this selfish maneuver, is really, beyond what we felt were his admirable attributes.

What the Council has done, with the exception of Councilwoman Pope-Ludhm who voted against the action, is to freeze Hernandez from decision making and participation in key actions at the committee level. More damaging, they (the Council) have effectively cut the citizens of the third ward from participation in the political process by limiting participation by their chosen elected official.

This is particularly disturbing because of the high percentage of Latinos that comprise the ward. After the first ward the third and sixth wards have the highest Latino population in the city. Because Hernandez would be the council member strongly carrying the Latino agenda, the Council, in effect, has sent a message to Latinos that their participation is not essential nor needed.

Hernandez should be given an opportunity to participate and work with the Mayor and Council in a productive manner. We believe that the Hernandez of old, confrontational and argumentative, is passed. Even in his response to his removal he stated, “I am really not angry, I am more disappointed.”

Councilman Maudsley is reconsidering the action. The Council, particularly Flores, should follow Maudsley’s leadership and move to either reconsider or rescind their action. If not corrected, a precedence will be established for future committee assignments that could be manipulated by elected officials that have their own selfish vested interests in mind.

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Kiwanis Club of Greater San Bernardino raises funds for Blood Bank, Option House

Kathy Flynn, Kiwanis Club of Greater San Bernardino president-elect is presenting a $600 check to Paul Sautter, Blood Bank’s Community Relations Director, toward the purchase of a bloodmobile. A St. Patrick’s Dance was held at Norton’s Officers Club as part of a fundraising project toward the Blood Bank and Option House. Witnessing the ceremony is Ray Quinto, Kiwanis Club president.

American Cancer Society Seeks Volunteers

The American Cancer Society is looking for thirty eager volunteers to help with the operation of its new Riverside Discovery Shop. Volunteers are needed on a regular basis—once a week minimum—to sort, price and sell donated merchandise. If you or someone you know is interested, contact Barbara Lewis at 714/824-2724, 683-6415 or 983-2764.

*Our Lady of the Tortilla*

Carmen Zapata laughs during a scene from "Our Lady of the Tortilla," Luis Santeiro’s Bilingual Foundation of the Arts comedy to be staged April 18 and 19 in the San Bernardino Valley College Auditorium, 701 S. Mt. Vernon Ave., San Bernardino. Zapata plays a devout spinster who sees an apparition of the Blessed Virgin on a tortilla while praying for strength to finish a 1,000 tortilla order. Curtain time is 8:15 p.m. for both performances. The first is in Spanish, and the second is in English. Admission is $5, adults; $3, students, senior citizens and children 12 or under. For reservations call (714) 888-6511, Ext. 1127.

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Lt. Ron Casillas is "out flanked" by grandmothers "Kathy" Guzman (left) and "Concha" Casillas and father Roy Casillas.

Lt. Casillas plants a direct hit on the target, his fiancee Rita.

Stopping in Frankfurt, Germany, Lt. Casillas visited with his brother George, for two hours. Eventually, the plane landed in Westover, Massachusetts on March 9th. "We had not anticipated the homecoming that was waiting for us. We were greeted like heroes with a huge American flag, decorations and a band playing. And a beer wagon and food. But it made us feel good. However, I felt sorry for the Vietnam veterans that were not warmly welcomed when they returned."

Returning to Fort Campbell, Lt. Casillas was given leave and decided to visit his fiancee, Rita Abrams, in San Antonio, Texas. "The ticket agent in Nashville asked me if I had come back from the war and when I responded that I had, she reduced my plane ticket, walked around the office, gave me a big hug and said, 'welcome home and thanks for everything'. That really shook me. Again, on the plane, the stewardess kept giving me drinks and food throughout the trip. I felt very uncomfortable. When the plane landed in San Antonio, the pilot, co-pilot, stewardesses and passengers were at the plane door, welcoming me back, thanking me and gave me a bottle of champagne. That really shook me."

Arriving at his fiancee's home in San Antonio, her family invited him to a Mexican supper club for the evening. During supertime, the orchestra started playing in his honor with a spotlight on him and every person stood up and applauded him. "This was really something for me which I was unprepared for and unable to deal with and it really shook me up," he said.

His fiancee and he visited his mother in San Diego where he celebrated his 33rd birthday and was scheduled on March 30th to visit his family in San Bernardino.

Leaning back against the easy chair, Lt. Casillas spoke philosophically about the Gulf War and the affect on his life. "All of us were aware that going over was due to protect the oil resources in the area. We also knew that Saddam Hussein is a dictator and has not only abused the Iraqi and Kuwaiti people, but murdered many of them. He is a ruthless dictator. It was, and is necessary that he be stopped, whatever it takes. I am proud to be fighting for our country and the leadership that President Bush has provided. I'm not a hero, but I am willing to die for what this country stands for, for all the benefits that it can provide for my little cousins and for our future. We are not aware of the total support that we had in the United States, but I get a good feeling from it. It takes a war or going to a foreign country to appreciate what we have here in the United States. I'm sure glad to be back."

"Welcome Home" - Cont. from page 1
Coalition - From p. 1

individual minority groups are striving to become more active in every area, especially in the political areas.

Arnold San Miguel, CFR Minority Demographic Specialist, presented general census data and specific population figures in which minorities groups reflected demographic increases since the 1980 census. The County of San Bernardino gained 523,364 persons which is a 58.48 percent increase and a gain of 128.25 percent for Hispanics, according to Mr. San Miguel.

Jerry Lopez, CFR and Fontana Hispanic Chamber of Commerce member, proposed recommendations for the 65th and 66th Assembly Districts, and in combination of the two assembly districts, would compose the 34th Senate District. The assembly districts would have 386,078 and 372,000 respectively.

Walter Hawkins, CFR and San Bernardino West Side Action Group member, recommended realignments for the 35th which comprise the upper desert and 36th covering the San Bernardino, Colton, Rialto, Fontana, Ontario and Pomona. A second option would eliminate Pomona and include the Casa Blanca area.

Population representation would be 575,220 and 575,000 respectively, including the option plan.


San "G" MECHa Plans Super Walk-A-Thon

The Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA) of San Gorgonio has scheduled a SuperWalk-A-Thon fundraiser on Saturday, April 13, 1991, at 9:00 A.M. with starting point being at Mount Vernon and Mill Street (behind Taco Tia). Fred and Sylvia Chavez, Benji Ibarra and Mr. and Mrs. Pedro Hernandez are sponsors of the event.

Persons wishing further information on the event may call Ms. Lopez at (714) 888-1790.
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- Perkins Loan (NDSL)
- Board of Governors Grant Waiver (BOGG)

FINANCIAL AIDS STAFF

Dennis L. Farhar, District Director SBVC/CHC
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