

Opinion

Son's crime doesn't justify keeping mother in the dark

Until recently, Benita Tejera shared her home with two of her sons, 21-year-old Elvis and 14-year-old Ronald. Her meticulously well-kept north-Bryan home is no bigger than a two-car garage, and she can't afford such modern amenities as a telephone or a car. Without the help of the Housing and Urban Development program, Benita, who speaks only Spanish, couldn't afford her home, and without food stamps her family might not eat.

Mike Sullivan
Guest Columnist

But Benita and her family don't complain about being poor because being poor is all they've ever known. Her family stability doesn't come from money, it comes from love and a sense of family unity. A big source of that family unity was Elvis.

Benita's daughter-in-law Belinda is married to Elvis' older brother, Rudy. Belinda described Elvis as a person who always was outgoing.

"Elvis had a lot of friends and girlfriends, and he always liked to dress nice," Belinda said. He made dressing well a career for a little while, working as a model. In his scrapbook are pictures of Elvis modeling clothes for a large audience at a mall and some candid shots of him laughing with friends.

"He was always goofing around, pretending he was a singer like Michael Jackson," Belinda said.

Elvis and his upbeat nature were a big part of

the Tejera family, and that's why it hurt the Tejeras so much when he was killed.

Elvis, who worked as a security guard last summer, was shot twice and killed by College Station Police as he and two others attempted to rob a local 7-Eleven store Oct. 26.

More than a month after his death, Benita feels the sting of her son's loss as though he were killed yesterday. And because she still doesn't completely understand the circumstances surrounding Elvis' death, the pain is not likely to subside.

The Tejeras readily acknowledge that what Elvis did was wrong and that he should have been punished for his crime. All they want to know is why he had to die for it and if the police could have handled the situation in a better way.

Translating for Benita, Belinda explained what happened the night Elvis was killed and what the College Station Police told Benita about her son's death.

Tuesday night Elvis took Belinda, who was visiting Benita, home at about 11:30 p.m. He said he would return home after dropping off his sister-in-law, but that was the last Benita heard from her son.

At about 11 a.m. the next day, Benita said, three College Station police officers came to her home and told her that Elvis had been killed at about 2 a.m. Wednesday as he was attempting to rob a 7-

Eleven store. She didn't get the details of the shooting from the officer's explanation.

An autopsy was done on Elvis' body, the results of which have not yet been released, and he was buried on Friday of that week.

A few days after the funeral, two more College Station police officers and a Houston police officer visited Benita. She said the officers asked questions about Elvis, but didn't tell her any more about the shooting.

"They told her that there was a police report, but because we're the family they couldn't show it to us," Belinda said.

Benita said that she and her family have called repeatedly to get a copy of the police report and have visited the police station, but the person they have been talking to at the station hasn't let them see the report.

However, Rita Watkins, the detective handling the case, said there is a police report, and the Tejeras may see it, but it first must be cleared through the district attorney.

Although Benita hasn't seen an autopsy report, her husband, who identified Elvis' body, told her that Elvis had been shot twice, once in the lower back area and once in the neck area. Police confirmed that and said Elvis, who was holding a hostage, was shot first from behind by a hiding officer — it's unclear whether the officer identified him-

self to Elvis or not — and then in the throat area an officer standing directly in front of him.

Officers say Elvis looked like he was about to shoot and they had no choice but to fire on him. The hostage said he believes the second shot, the throat area, killed Elvis.

According to police, Elvis never fired a weapon and the other two men, one unarmed, the other armed with a machete, also were shot by police. Police said the entire ordeal was over in minutes and a total of eight shots were fired by two officers.

Until the Tejeras recently read a newspaper account of the shooting as given by a hostage, another employee in the store, they didn't know the circumstances of Elvis' death, and they don't have all the facts.

The College Station Police Department offers no hostage crisis training for its officers, however, Brazos County grand jury said that even with such special training the officers who did the shooting "acted properly."

But 45 days after the shooting, College Station police still have not explained to the Tejeras exactly what happened and why they had to kill Elvis.

Belinda is poor, she can't afford an attorney, she deserves to know why her son is dead.

Mike Sullivan is a senior journalism major and staff writer for The Battalion.

Health club's closing not a catastrophe

Good news! My health club has closed. It's the one right around the corner from my office, the one so close that there was (almost) no excuse not to go to it daily. It's the one I joined to retard aging, fight death, bring back the body I never had in the first place, give me legs that are legs and arms that are arms instead of the ones I have been using all these years, which, to tell the truth, lack tone. Like my grandfather before me, I have the body of a pinochle player.



Richard Cohen

weighed on me. I felt as I had in high school when I didn't do my homework. Once, out of guilt, I dropped by and did 100 miles or so on the stationary bicycle. The staff greeted me cordially, took out my file and remonstrated with me: Where had I been? Didn't I care about my body? Lacking courage, I said nothing about preferring to read, about forsaking muscle tone for a hour with my pal, Franz Schubert. Instead, I made up all kinds of excuses — overseas, busy. And then the worst lie of all: "I've been running outdoors."

At night, instead of running the treadmill to oblivion, I sat in my office and read. I caught up with papers and magazines, put the mail in neat piles and listened to music. Novels beckoned, worlds opened. My stomach sagged; my mind firmed up. My muscles returned to balance — weak balancing weak. I was at last in decadent equilibrium.

Recently the health club called and left a message. I did not return the call. They surely were going to ask where I had been or tell me I owed money. I could not face telling them the person I had become. Their very bodies — muscles balancing muscles — would mock me. There were probably new charts on

the wall, something new in diet, yet another food that could give you cancer, whole new ways of doing sit-ups, a major breakthrough in push-ups.

A couple of days later, I picked up the phone: "Richard, this is Sally at the health club." Caught. "Oh, hi, Sally, I'm glad you called. I was just about to come down and..."

Then she said they were closing — lost their lease or something. My heart soared, but I didn't let on. "How awful. I'm so sorry. What will I do now?"

I bounced over to the club to clean out my locker. I said goodbye to the staff, promised I would check out their new location and then, as soon as I was out of sight, bounded up the stairs, giggling all the way.

Death will now come sooner, I know. But at least when it comes, the new me will be prepared for what follows.

Deal me in, Grandpa.

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"My broker is Ivan Boesky... and when Ivan Boesky talks..."

Counties should recognize need for extension agents

Funding system for TAEX offices needs to change

It seems everything in Texas is hitting rock bottom these days, from the slumping oil industry to the defense-less Dallas Cowboys.

Bob Grube
Guest Columnist

But just as Randy White shouldn't take the blame for his team's downfall, neither should the county agriculture agents of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service have to shoulder the burden of the state's budget cuts.

But that's exactly what's happening in all 254 counties across the state.

The TAEX has an extension office in every Texas county. The offices are staffed according to the county's population and needs. The TAEX didn't escape the Grim Reaper's double-edged funding axe as it chopped away at not only state funds, but at staff positions, too.

However, the spectre of drastic layoffs and budget cuts never appeared as ominously as people had feared it would, and the cuts turned into more of a pain in the neck than a major problem for state agencies.

But this isn't true for the TAEX county agents.

At first glance, the TAEX seems to have gotten a reprieve from the swinging funding axe, losing about \$3 million of its \$39.8 million 1986-87 budget. Compared to original expectations of a 13 percent cut, the TAEX appears to have come out OK.

But a closer look reveals that the TAEX is having to continue Gov. Mark White's hiring freeze to keep from losing more money to budget cuts. And this is what is so unfair to the county agents.

They are having to cover two or more vacant staff positions and are working double time with no extra pay. The Brazos County agent's typical day begins about 6 a.m. and ends about 10 p.m. He also works several hours on week-ends, and he's been doing it since February.

This isn't fair to him or his family. How long can a person be expected to do double the work for no increase in pay because of job satisfaction or a sense of duty to the 40,000 people he comes into contact with each year?

Eventually programs will have to be cut that many people depend on, and then, if that doesn't ease the agents' workloads, the agents themselves may become frustrated and quit. Job satisfac-

tion and a sense of duty can last only so long.

The TAEX funding system for county offices needs to change. Currently, the counties are responsible for about 20 percent of the agents' salaries. When the state has a budget cut, the agents' salaries, the counties cry, say they can't take up the slack.

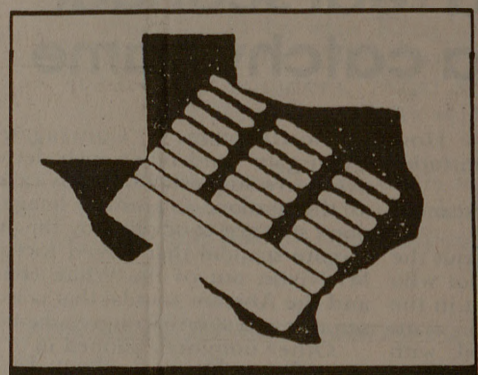
Unfortunately, all county funding increases must be approved by the courts, which don't dispense funds enthusiastically. But the counties must make a decision soon and prioritize some things.

They must decide what is most important: keep county agents — paying them — they are worth saving the money, losing agents, and consequently, losing quality extension program.

It is clear that agents are not paid and overworked. They should be offered a competitive salary and a reasonable workload. It has been estimated that extension agents come into contact with more than 6.5 million Texans a year whether it's regarding ranching, fire or rose bush fungus.

Can Texas afford to lose these dedicated men and women?

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The Battalion

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