



Jacobs' Ladder

Federal Sign employees Doug Snider, on the ground, and Tony Jacobs replace a neon trans-

Photo by Robert W. Rizzo

Court upholds life sentence of prison activist

AUSTIN (AP) — The aggravated robbery conviction and life sentence for prison activist David Ruiz was upheld Wednesday by the 3rd Court of Appeals.

It was Ruiz who, while serving an earlier prison sentence in 1972, filed the lawsuit that led to a sweeping overhaul of the Texas prison system, reforms which continue today.

Ruiz had appealed his conviction and prison sentence in the Sept. 15, 1984 robbery of three people in an Austin residence.

According to court records, three men broke into the house that evening, robbed the residents, beat one of the men and sexually assaulted a woman.

About a week later, the victims identified Ruiz from a lineup of 49 photographs. A subsequent search of his home found jewelry described by two of the victims along with several firearms.

"We find the evidence sufficient to support the judgment of conviction," the unanimous opinion authored by Justice John Powers said.

Ruiz had argued several errors were made that should overturn his conviction, including a contention that he was improperly placed in double jeopardy because an earlier trial for the aggravated robbery of one of the victims ended in a mistrial.

State District Judge C.C. "Kit" Cooke sentenced Ruiz to life in prison as a habitual criminal after the 1985 trial.

According to court records, Ruiz has been convicted several times for crimes including robbery in 1960, aggravated robbery in 1968 and aggravated perjury in 1982.

Ruiz was the chief plaintiff in the federal lawsuit that sparked major changes in the Texas Department of Corrections. The suit alleged that the state's prisons were overcrowded, there were inadequate sanitary and medical facilities and that prison officials allowed selected convicts to supervise other inmates.

The Texas prison system today remains under federal court order to improve conditions for inmates.

Ruiz's lawyer, Bob Looney, argued during the 1985 trial that law enforcement officers and prosecutors had picked on Ruiz because of his prison reform activities.

Music teacher adds harmony to lives of older people through rock 'n' roll

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Gary Botello believes a person never gets too old to rock 'n' roll — although some individuals may need to slow down the beat.

So without a fret, 34-year-old Botello has taken it upon himself to help people twice his age add some harmony to their lives by learning to play the guitar.

The city Parks and Recreation Department employee developed a program in which he teaches four music classes on Friday mornings for senior citizens who participate in activities at the Commander's House on South Main Avenue.

"I am probably learning a lot more from them," Botello said.

"I have learned to relax because most of them are pretty mellow," he said. "But I try to tailor the lessons to where their interests lie."

Botello, who has worked with the Parks and

Recreation Department for 10 years, said beginning and intermediate students usually take guitar lessons to enjoy the companionship of other musicians their age. Ambitious advanced students learn to read music.

A guitar player since 1964, Botello said many of his students at the Commander's House are progressing.

But he admits none plays well enough to become the next Eddie Van Halen.

"Van Halen... I don't think most of the people here would even know who he is," Botello said, referring to the famous rock 'n' roll guitar player. "But a song like 'Kansas City' is pretty heavy metal to them."

Even though he may not be molding future musical super stars, Botello said it is rewarding to know that his classes have enabled his students to enjoy their lives on a brighter note.

"Some of them have told me it helps their arthritis," he said. "One lady said she used to get

bad attacks in her fingers. They have gotten better since she's been playing the guitar."

But then again the future could hold some surprises.

For example, Botello never intended to learn to play the guitar. When he was attending the fifth grade in Fairfield, N.J., he and some friends decided to get some instruments and mimic the Beatles and the Dave Clark Five in an elementary school talent show.

But the show was canceled and they never had a chance to lip sync for their childhood fans, so they learned to play the instruments for real.

He moved to San Antonio with his family 14 years ago.

When he is not teaching at the Commander's House, Botello teaches classes for students of all ages at other city facilities. He also plays in a San Antonio band, Rich and Company.

Church serves up nourishment for body, soul

DALLAS (AP) — On Sundays, Shannon Murphy receives the word of God at the Park Cities Baptist Church. On a weekday afternoon, she journeys to her house of worship for nourishment of a different sort.

"I come here for the grilled cheese sandwich," said Murphy, 17. "I'm not kidding."

Hidden beneath the soaring steeple of the red-brick church on Northwest Highway, a little-known Baptist burger joint called The Pickwick has fed the hungry for nearly 25 years. Though the airy, nine-booth grill barely breaks even, church administrators said they'd rather lose money than forsake their corn-dog ministry.

"From a cost-effective standpoint, that place should be closed," church

business administrator Jack Shelton said. "But from a ministry point of view, boy, that place must stay open. It's a huge attraction for our young people."

Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekdays, except Wednesday when the grill stays open until 6 p.m. to accommodate church activities, The Pickwick serves as a gathering place for mothers collecting little ones from church day care, older church members organizing visits to the homebound and the church's 65 full-time staffers, Shelton said.

People "in the business world" also dine at The Pickwick, said Don Duren, minister of activities, referring to workers in the myriad small shops across the street. And when

school ends, Duren said, The Pickwick becomes a summer hangout for teenagers who grab a burger after basketball in the church's full-size gymnasium or foosball in the recreation room just beyond the lime- and lemon-colored booths.

Shelton said, "In early American life, the church was really one of the central modes of life. And it's coming back to that place."

With an inexpensive diner like The Pickwick, Park Cities Baptist Church is nudging that trend along. Most of the items are sold at cost, Shelton said, and, of course, there's no sales tax charged. The 5,900-member church, being a non-profit entity, pays no taxes on the approximately \$400 The Pickwick collects daily, he said.

A "Pickwick Hamburger (buns and meat only) costs a dollar. Large milk shakes (vanilla, strawberry and chocolate) are 90 cents; coffee costs a quarter. The most popular Pickwick luncheon, a cheeseburger and french fries, according to counter clerk Lorenza Razo, costs less than \$2.

Its reasonable prices are just one reason for The Pickwick's popularity, however. Even when it's closed, the little diner attracts a crowd, said Jay Propes, who was enjoying a Pickwick chef's salad on Tuesday.

"A lot of people skip Sunday school down here," said Propes, 19. "From those stairs (leading to the sanctuary), they can't see you sitting in the booths."

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