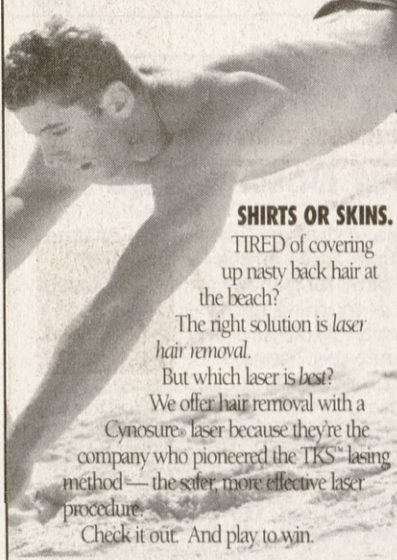


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WORLD

THE BATTALION

Thursday, February 2, 2000

Grandmothers visit Elian in Miami
Cubans question the boy's level of freedom in U.S.

HAVANA (AP) — The grandmothers of Elian Gonzalez deny that they are being pressured by the Cuban government to demand the boy's return to Cuba and say his personality has changed while in the United States.

"We are not hostages. We are acting freely," paternal grandmother Mariela Quintana said during a 90-minute broadcast Tuesday night on Cuban state television.

Jeanne O'Laughlin, a nun of the Dominican order who hosted their meeting with Elian last week, has said she now favors keeping the 6-year-old in the United States, in part because she believes the Cuban government is manipulating the family.

"She is the one who is not free," said maternal grandmother Raquel Rodriguez, who wept while recalling the meeting with Elian. "She is a lying person. It's a lie... so many lies."

The boy has been at the center of an international custody battle pitting his father and grandparents in Cuba against the boy's great-uncle in Miami.

The grandmothers complained that the child — who has lived most of his life in their homes

— seemed quiet and withdrawn when he was brought to meet them on Jan. 26 at the home of O'Laughlin, president of Barry University.

"He looked frightened... His face was sad. He was not the boy we knew," Quintana said.

They said the boy's second-cousin, Marisleysis Gonzalez, apparently remained with O'Laughlin and another nun in a room next door and could listen through an open entryway, despite an agreement that members of the Miami family would not be at the meeting.

In a column published Tuesday in the *New York Times*, O'Laughlin said she now favors keeping Elian in the United States with Marisleysis Gonzalez partly because the boy "has transferred his maternal love to her" following the loss of his mother. She said the grandmothers seemed fearful — apparently of their own government.

Rodriguez said Elian seemed nervous when the grandmothers questioned the presence of his cousin. "He said, 'Look grandmother, this is my cousin,'" she said. "He said it as if the boy was depending on her, that he could not be without her."

Quintana said that Marisleysis Gonzalez had almost no relationship with Elian before the November shipwreck.

The women said their meeting with the boy was repeatedly interrupted by nuns offering food or bringing messages. Rodriguez said one nun entered three times with the same message.

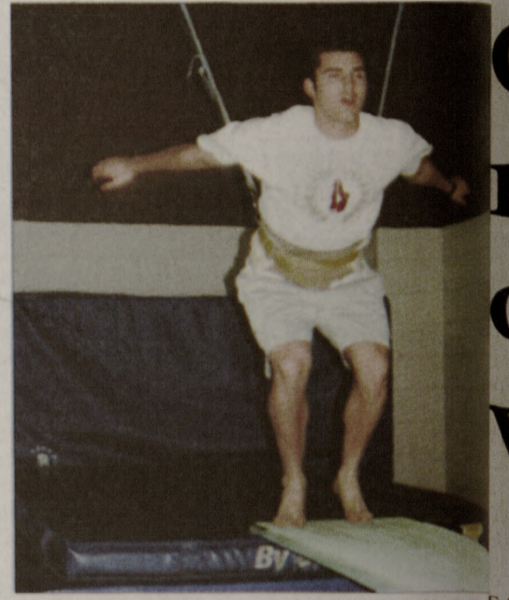
They said that the boy was starting to warm up when O'Laughlin halted the meeting after 90 minutes, short of the two-hour minimum reportedly agreed to.

After the boy was taken away, "We cried a lot. That was terrible," Quintana said.

Quintana said attempts to speak with the boy by telephone either from the United States or Cuba had been unsuccessful because they were always told that the child was either sleeping or out. She said the boy's father, however, had managed to speak to the boy twice in recent days.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has ruled Elian should be returned to his father, but the Miami relatives are trying to block that action in federal court. U.S. District Judge William Hoeweler will hear arguments Feb. 22 on whether their lawsuit should be dismissed.

Flip it



ELIZABETH O'FARRELL
Jesse Evan, a junior biomedical science major, works on his back flips at the varsity diving team's dry land practice.

Europe fears radical Austrian government

VIENNA, Austria (AP) — Facing European sanctions and worldwide scorn, Austria's president on Wednesday delayed approving a new government that includes Joerg Haider's rightists until leaders of the coalition pledge to respect democratic values.

The outrage over the coalition between Haider's Freedom Party and the center-right Austrian People's Party spilled into the streets of this stately, baroque capital. More than 10,000 people rallied Wednesday night in front of the People's Party headquarters to protest the coalition deal.

"Prove yourself to be a patriot," the theater producer Andre Heller told the crowd in remarks directed to People's Party leader Wolfgang Schuessel. "No alliance with meanness. No alliance with right-wing radicalism."

President Thomas Klestil's office said Haider and Schuessel would meet with the chief of state Thursday to sign a "declaration of values of European democracy." The new government was expected to be approved shortly thereafter.

Klestil's demand was designed to spare the country political and diplomatic isolation within a European Union whose other members doubt Haider's commitment to liberal democratic values.

In an interview to be published Thursday, Klestil told the magazine *News* that he fears Austria will suffer "international damage" if a government including Haider's Freedom Party takes power.

Haider won international notoriety about 10 years ago by praising Adolf Hitler's "orderly" employment policies and lauding veterans of the murderous Waffen SS as "men of honor." He has also spoken out against the EU's expansion and has predicted the new government will impose a nearly complete ban on immigration.

Haider has sought repeatedly to distance himself from previous statements. He told reporters this week that the Freedom Party has no sympathy for the Nazis, adding they were responsible for the "greatest crimes of the 20th century."

However, Haider condemned the

foreign pressure against his party together what he called "the attempt from the outside to oppose the [Austrian] wish to change the political system is not acceptable."

Assurances by Haider and his coalition partners that their new government would be a democratic one were dismissed by the plea bargain that swept through Israel in the wake of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

Portugal's prime minister, Antonio Guterres, said any coalition government would bring diplomatic isolation toward him.

Norway issued a similar warning Wednesday. Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel urged his government to cancel ski holidays in Austria.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak said he had done, or would do, "nothing," she said. It took Sarraf from the trauma of the Sept. 11 attacks to cope with the growing faith in the "Jesus, I realized," she said. Most victims can handle the trauma and are reluctant to seek counseling, said Brazos County Commissioner "There is a growing when through a life-altering trauma. The Student Service Center (SSC) on campus has many student families resulting in the death of a family member.

With an agreement between Haider and Schuessel in place, attention turned to President Klestil, a courtier and former career diplomat. His role in the new government is largely ceremonial, but he must swear in a new government by referring to the constitution.

In principle, Klestil could refuse to approve a coalition and even call for new elections, though such a move would be tantamount to a vote of no confidence in Austria's post-war history.

Neither party leader has ruled out the possibility of a coalition government. The Austria Press Agency said the Cabinet would be formed between the two parties, with Haider as chancellor and a Freedom Party member as vice chancellor.

The Interior Ministry would be headed by a member of the People's Party, said.

The Interior Ministry is responsible for immigration policies and oversees the police — high priorities for the party, which wants to restrict immigration and has a tough law and order

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ANGELA'S ASHES (R) 12:20 2:40 5:10 7:50 10:25 1:00	ANY GIVEN SUNDAY (R) 9:55
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (R) 12:10 2:30 4:55 7:35 10:15 12:40	DEUCE BIGALOW (R) 9:55
DOWN TO YOU (PG-13) 1:10 4:10 7:00 9:50 12:50	GALAXY QUEST (PG) 11:55 2:15 4:40 7:45 10:20 12:35
GIRL INTERRUPTED (R) 11:45 3:35 7:35 11:40	MAGNOLIA (R) 1:30 2:45 5:00 7:30 9:40
NEXT FRIDAY (R) 11:50 2:20 4:45 7:15 10:00 12:20	PLAY IT TO THE BONE* (R) 1:15 4:05 7:10 10:05 12:55
SHOW FALLING ON CEDARS (PG-13) 2:10 7:40	STUART LITTLE (R) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:30 9:40
SUPERNOVA (PG-13) 12:20 5:15 10:30	THE GREEN MILE (R) 12:05 4:50 8:00 11:50
THE HURRICANE (R) 12:15 3:30 6:40 9:50 12:50	THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY (R) 12:50 3:50 6:50 9:45 12:45

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