Borderland B

El Paso Times Sunday, May 30, 2010 Metro Editor Milan Simonich, 546-6124, msimonich@elpasotimes.com

Ramón Rentería

It's tedious, but hey — jury duty is important

EL PASO — The wheels of justice run super slow. We didn't realize how slow until 50 of us were summoned the other morning to the El Paso County Courthouse to be screened as potential jurors.

The clerk said we would play the "hurry up and wait" game but didn't warn us it would last all day.

He checked us in at Liberty Hall and left, presumably to check on when we should hike across the street to the courthouse. And we waited, some of us tinkering with our iPods and cell phones (thank God this wasn't federal court).

Finally, we were sent to County Criminal Court-at-Law No. 4.

We cruised up and down the seventh-floor hallway, like Bob Dylan lost in the rain in Juárez, looking for a courtroom that does not physically exist. Court No. 4 borrows Court No. 2 or any other space it can find.

As massive as the County Courthouse seems, someone neglected to build enough courtroom space.

We wait and wait and wait, this time in the perfect spot to observe all sorts of people: a homeboy wearing a skull and crucifix T-shirt and toting a small boy, a copy of himself, on his shoulders, a law clerk or very young lawyer chick looking like Barbie, and scores of lawyers looking important with their dark leather briefcases.

Are you required by law to wear a goatee to be a court bailiff?

So we're herded into the courtroom, and the people who really don't want to serve on jury duty come up all kinds of excuses. The rest of us try not to make eye contact with lawyers.

Anyway, they picked six of us to listen to testimony and evaluate the evidence.

The judge said jury service is not a waste of time but one of those big responsibilities like voting, military service and something else. (Pay attention, *loco*.)

▶ Day 2: More waiting and waiting and waiting, this time in a borrowed jury room overlooking the killing fields of Juárez and filled with patriotic stuff and a portrait of a thin, pale-skinned woman wearing a Lone Ranger mask.

We sit in the jury room, seemingly forever, five guys and one woman: a young nurse, a rural school coach, a

Mission to graduate 1st class

SISD seniors complete 2-year college degrees, also earn high-school diplomas

By David Burge
EL PASO TIMES

EL PASO — Socorro Independent School District students are getting a jump on their peers and their college educations.

More than 100 seniors from Mission Early College High School have already received two-year degrees from El Paso Community College.

Come Saturday, they will receive their high-school diplomas to become the first graduating class from Mission High.

The school has 482 students who are simultaneously working on their high-school diplomas and associate degrees from college.

This program started in the 2006-07 school year and does not charge tuition.

Located on EPCC's Mission Del Paso Campus, the school will graduate 115 seniors. Of those, 109 already have a two-year college degree, and they are on the fast track toward a bachelor's degree, Principal Armando Aguirre said.

The six who have not received associate degrees are just a class or two away, he said.

Moreover, 65 students are ahead of this fast-paced schedule. They have taken at least a half-year of classes at the University of Texas at El Paso while in still in high school. Twenty-three have completed a full year at UTEP, Aguirre said.

Senior Daniel Vazquez, 18, received his associate degree in

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RUDY GUTIERREZ / EL PASO TIMES

Memorial Day **Kimberly Juarez, 9,** a Girl Scout from Troop 153 in East El Paso, was among many Scouts who placed an American flag in front of each grave marker at Fort Bliss National Cemetery on Saturday. The annual Memorial Day observance at the cemetery will take place at 8:30 a.m. Monday.

Capital Bank names leader

By Ramon Bracamontes
EL PASO TIMES

EL PASO — International banking executive Hector Retta, who formerly ran Wells Fargo's Border Banking, is returning to El Paso as the new president and chief executive officer of the recently acquired Capital Bank of El Paso.

Retta's return was announced Friday by Capital Bank. He will take over in June, subject to regulatory approval, according to a press release sent by Capital Bank.

Capital Bank is in the midst of being sold to El Paso businessman Bill Sanders and a group of Dallas investors. The acquisition was approved May 6 by the U.S. Office of Thrift Supervision. Because the sale is not final, bank officials could not comment on Friday about the pending sale or Retta's hiring.

Retta left his position last week as the regional president of Wells Fargo in Orange County, Calif., a position he had since

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Teenfest 2010

Free event features cars, entertainment, draws record crowd

By David Burge
EL PASO TIMES

EL PASO — Teenagers, younger kids and their families enjoyed a car show, music, face-painting and other activities at Teenfest 2010 on Saturday.

A record crowd of about 3,000 attended the event at Cohen Stadium, said city Library Director Carol Brey-Casiano.

The El Paso Public Library organized the free event to provide safe and positive activities for teens and to promote literacy and reading, Brey-Casiano said. The event has been held for five years, the past three at Cohen Stadium.

"Teens have such complicated lives and face so many pressures," Brey-Casiano said. "We want to do everything that we can to support them."

Six bands played throughout the day. They included rock bands Jayden's Playground and Skunk and blues band Crossing White Elephants.

About 150 social agencies that provide services to teens, vendors and colleges had booths at the festival.

Library officials also signed up teens to join their summer reading program, issued library cards and gave away about 2,000 books, Brey-Casiano said.

Westsider Conor Bellegarde, 18, is a member of the El Paso Youth Council, a group that gets involved in city government.

Bellegarde said Teenfest is a "great way to kick off the summer."

"You can check out all these booths, see the cars and listen to music," he said. "It a great day to get out of the house."

Gloria Duran, an outreach worker with Texas A&M University, ran a booth, along with a group of pre-teens and teenagers, that was designed to create a fun way to learn about the dangers of smoking.

The booth, sponsored by the university and the Paso Del Norte Smoke-Free Initiative, featured two educational games.

The purpose is to help teach teens about the chemicals contained in tobacco and the negative health effects of secondhand smoke, Duran said.

Teens then pass the message on to their peers and to their families, she said.

"We've been busy since we

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VANESSA MONSISVAIS / EL PASO TIMES

Frankie Gaytan, 4, enjoys playing in the water on Saturday during the fifth annual Public Library Teenfest at Cohen Stadium. The free event aims to provide safe and positive activities for teens and younger children and to promote literacy and reading.