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~J. GONZALEZ

Graciela Gonzalez’s grace leaves indelible mark on community

BY FRANCISCO GUAJARDO
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

BEARING WITNESS

Graciela Gonzalez died July 18, 2020, due to COVID-19 complications. Born on April 15, 1954, in Weslaco, she lived a life of commitment to her three children, 15 grandchildren and her entire family.

Graciela’s son Eli bore witness to his mother’s life. He was there to hear her last few words as he stood by for 10 hours in the emergency room at Knapp Medical Center in Weslaco.

Before they carted her off to the COVID-19 unit, Eli asked, “What are you thinking about, mother?” She responded, “I’m just worried. I’m worried about my kids.” And they exchanged their last

loved ones. It’s the way she knew to display responsibility, love, care and compassion. Eli recalls the countless moments she was present for her nieces, nephews and children’s sporting events. If she made a commitment to watch them play, she would make it.

For the past decade, Eli has coached baseball at Weslaco High School, so his work schedule has often kept him from attending his sons’ sporting events. But Graciela made her (and his) presence felt at every game. She loved



Graciela Gonzalez died in July due to COVID-19. The Weslaco native was known as a loving and committed parent, grandmother and aunt whose grace and selflessness have left an indelible impact on her family and community.

Courtesy photo

watching her grandsons Brandon, Zachary and Christian play and from afar would keep Eli posted, sometimes sending videos. Graciela didn’t know much

about baseball, so when Eli asked for details, she would respond, “Well, he hit the ball really hard, miijo, and he’s still on base, so I think it was good,” not really knowing the difference between a single, double or an out. She knew her presence alone was all her grandsons needed. She taught her children the same values when they grew up — to show love and support.

Graciela accomplished significant things in her life. For more than three decades, she worked with the South Texas Onion and Melon Committee in Mission, where she considered everyone there her extended family.

Prior to moving back to Weslaco in the early 1990s, she worked for the Sunnyside

School District in the state of Washington, where she lived and raised her children through the 1980s.

Sunnyside was her second home, and she built many long-lasting relationships.

When she returned to her beloved Weslaco, Graciela established her role in the community. Eli recalled, “My mother became like a mother to others,” and through the years, spread her grace. In all that she did, Graciela found love in the Lord and strength through the rosary.

Upon her death, her children established the Amazing Grace Memorial Scholarship Fund. The fund will spread Graciela’s goodwill

See **GONZALEZ** | 4A

Water world



Photos courtesy of Life Signs Photography

A retired shrimp boat is sunk off South Padre Island on Nov. 15 as part of the RGV Reef project as support boat crew members look on.

RGV Reef sinks two more boats

BY STEVE CLARK
STAFF WRITER



Support crew members make final preparations before sending a former shrimp boat to the bottom on Nov. 15 as part of the RGV Reef artificial reefing project, which started in 2015 and is boosting game fish populations off South Padre Island.

Friends of the RGV Reef sunk their fourth vessel on Nov. 15 as work on the massive artificial reefing project off South Padre Island continues.

The 78-foot former shrimp boat was christened the Genco Energy Services/Murray Meggison in recognition of the company’s donations of necessary equipment to support the project, which has resulted in an explosion of red snapper and other game fish populations off the coast since it began in 2015.

“We needed extended forklifts really bad, and they donated extended reach forklifts over a period of two years, plus all of our nighttime lighting needs,” said Friends President Gary Glick. “That saved us six figures.”

Meggison is owner and president of Genco. Last month Friends, a nonprofit organization, sank a 96-foot shrimp boat dubbed the EMR/Capt. Berry in honor of International Shipbreaking/EMR Group and the company’s vice president, Robert

Berry, for their support of the 1,650-acre reefing project, located 8 nautical miles off the Island and 14 nautical miles north of the Brazos Santiago Pass jetties. The typical Texas artificial reef is 80 acres.

Friends sank a derelict tugboat and another shrimp boat four years to the day before the Genco was sent to the bottom this month. Glick said preparing the retired vessels for reefing requires an obsessive level of atten-

tion to decontamination and stripping all non-metal parts. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Artificial Reefing Program must sign off on the decontamination work before the boats are deemed to TPWD and then sunk, he said.

Meanwhile, the project has acquired two additional vessels for decontamination and sinking at the earliest opportunity, Glick said. Sunken boats are just one aspect of RGV reef, which

also includes thousands of tons of low- and medium-relief elements such as cinder blocks, broken box culverts and concrete railroad ties.

Last January the project sank 12,640 tons of material and is planning to do another deployment beginning this January — opportune timing since deployment vessels are largely idle the first of the year, which makes them cheaper to hire, Glick said.

“We’ve got about 12,000 tons on the yard right now,” he said. “I don’t think that we can pass up this chance to reduce our marine transport deployment cost, because they’re the majority of our cost. If we can reduce the marine transport 40% then that means we can put out 40% more material.”

Glick described the project as the world’s largest industrial-scale nursery reef. Friends also plans to dump material at a site 18 miles offshore where TPWD sank the 473-foot Clipper, a World War II transport and attack ship, 13 years ago at a depth

See **REEF** | 4A

DPS to increase patrols through nationwide initiative for Thanksgiving

STAFF REPORT

As part of a nationwide operation, Texas Department of Public Safety troopers will increase patrols during Thanksgiving weekend, the agency announced in a news release Sunday.

“As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, we want to remind every Texan of their duty to drive defensively and help keep our roadways safe,” DPS Director Steven McCraw said in the release. “The holidays may look different this year, but it is still up to each of us to obey traffic laws and make safety our top priority behind the wheel.”

The Operation CARE (Crash Awareness and Reduction Effect) initiative will increase patrols Wednesday through Sunday. Through this initiative, the agency said troopers will be on the lookout for drivers violating the law, such as but not limited to: speeding, driving while intoxicated, failure to wear a seatbelt, driving without insurance and failure to comply with the state’s Move Over,

Slow Down law.

In addition to Operation CARE, troopers will also participate in the annual Click It or Ticket initiative, also running through Nov. 29. The Click It or Ticket initiative is an emphasis on enforcing seat belt use for drivers and passengers.

The news comes a few days before Thanksgiving, a holiday they noted may present additional challenges for drivers due to volume of increased travel.

Last year, DPS issued nearly 60,000 warnings and citations. Of those warnings, 6,460 were for speeding, 716 were for seat belt and child seat violations, 1,247 for driving without insurance and 406 for violating the Move Over, Slow Down law.

Additionally, the agency stated there were 304 DWI arrests, 231 felony arrests and 183 fugitive arrests during last year’s enforcement effort.

DPS also offered the following safety tips for Thanksgiving:

See **PATROL** | 4A

TPWD to stock trout at Harlingen sports complex

BY RICK KELLEY
STAFF WRITER

HARLINGEN — Ready the rods and bust out the bobbers, because rainbow trout will be on the menu for some lucky anglers this February.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is beginning its winter tradition of trout stocking in municipal ponds and lakes this week.

The Harlingen Sports Complex on Wilson Road will be stocked with 1,000 rainbow trout on Feb. 4, ready to challenge any ambitious angler with a fishing license or who is under 17 years of age and doesn’t need a license.

TPWD plans to stock a total of 332,188 rainbow trout throughout the state from November through March.

Since rainbow trout are unable to survive the Texas heat once winter’s over, wildlife officials urge

anglers to keep their daily bag limit of up to five trout. There is no size minimum.

“TPWD stocks catchable sized fish during winter months to create angling opportunities throughout Texas,” said TPWD’s rainbow trout program director Carl Kittel.

“Rainbow trout love cold water, can be caught on a variety of baits and lures (worms, power bait, corn, spinners, spoons, flies and more), and are great to take home and eat. Our winter rainbow trout program has been a favorite with anglers for over forty years,” he added.

The Harlingen Sports Complex is the only venue in the Rio Grande Valley which will be stocked with trout this winter.

Admittance to the Harlingen Sports Complex is free.

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Historic river crossing in West Texas is filled with death

BY JOHN MACCORMACK
SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

HORSE HEAD CROSSING, Texas — As state historical sites go, few can rival this remote muddy ford on the Pecos River for rank obscurity.

Until recently, only a bullet-pocked, vandalized state historical marker, erected in 1936, miles off the paved road, gave any hint of the wrenching frontier dramas that once played out here, 30 miles northeast of Fort Stockton.

As the marker inscription notes, the crossing got its odd name from the bleached animal skulls found hanging from bushes by a government surveyor in 1850.

Back then, when it was one of the few safe crossings along the treacherous, high-banked Pecos River, this was an action-packed and perilous place, the San Antonio Express-News reported.

Comanche war parties returning from Mexico with stolen horses crossed here, as did immigrants and adventurers drawn by the California goldfields, as well as



Jerry Lara | The San Antonio Express-News

Several living history groups set tents up at Horse Head Crossing, a ford across the Pecos River, in Pecos County, West Texas, Oct. 30.

pioneering cattle drovers, including Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, pushing their leggy longhorns through to northern markets.

From 1858 to 1861, the Butterfield Overland Mail stage also stopped here on its daring 2,700-mile run between St. Louis and San Francisco.

An intrepid reporter on

the first westward stage shared the grim observations made along the 75-mile waterless stretch coming to the Pecos from the east.

“Far as the eye could reach along the plain, decayed and decaying animals, the bones of cattle and sometimes of men, all told a fearful story of anguish and terrific death from the pangs of thirst,”

wrote Waterman L. Ormsby, who also noted the abundance of prairie dogs and antelope.

And while its importance began to fade 150 years ago, out here on the barren mesquite and greasewood flats, Horse Head Crossing has never been forgotten.

Some, in fact, rank it with the state’s most important historical sites.

“I think Horse Head Crossing is the second most iconic landmark in Texas, second to the Alamo, because so much history went through there, and also Larry McMurtry based his novel ‘Lonesome Dove’ on that cattle drive,” said Kirby Warnock, 68, secretary of the Pecos County Historical Commission.

“Only some of us who live out here in Pecos County know about it. It’s out there in the middle of nowhere on a dead end road on the Pecos River,” added Warnock, who recalls visiting the famous crossing as a child with his father.

Warnock still marvels at the guts and determination required of Goodnight, Loving and their drovers on their first cattle drive, trying to reach water at Horse Head Crossing.

“It was a death march. Either they got to water in so much time, or the cattle died. They were in the saddle 30 hours. And when they got near the crossing, the cattle stampeded, and they lost a bunch of them,” he said.

On the last weekend in

October, the tranquil old crossing sprang vibrantly to life, as hundreds of folks, including western artists, historians and local cowmen, gathered to celebrate and retell its colorful history.

For two days, the Dutch ovens glowed and wood smoke billowed, the bugles blared and fiery cannons lit the night, and in the evening, guitarists played cowboy songs.

Among the tunes heard was “The Ballad of Pecos Bill,” who was Texas’s most famous fictional cowboy. As the story goes, young Billy fell out of the family wagon while crossing the Pecos and was raised by coyotes. The lyrics describe him as “the roughest, toughest critter, never known to be a quitter.”

At serving time, the campfire grub ran to biscuits, tin pot coffee, beef stew and chili, with plenty of beans.

Diners ate standing up, from plates set on heavy pine planks laid between metal barrels.

There were scholarly presentations and performances by historical re-enactors dressed in frontier garb.

Man accused in fatal stabbing case is extradited to Nevada

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — A 23-year-old man accused in a fatal stabbing in Las Vegas and then posting to Snapchat with the victim’s property has been extradited to Nevada’s Clark County, authorities said.

Las Vegas Metro Police said 23-year-old Nile Herrington was arrested Nov. 2 north of Austin, Texas in connection with the death of 34-year-old Anthony King.

Herrington is accused of stabbing King on Oct. 25 inside a Las Vegas apartment.

Jail records show Herrington was booked into the Clark County Detention

Center on Friday.

After the stabbing, Herrington allegedly drove to Texas in King’s car.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reports that King’s friends gave officers photos from Herrington’s Snapchat, where he had reportedly posted multiple times wearing King’s unique jewelry and driving King’s car.

Metro Police said King owned multiple short-term rentals in Las Vegas and hired Herrington to clean them.

Investigators believe Herrington stabbed King with a steak knife found at the scene, then robbed the victim’s residence before driving to Texas.

Family that got virus warns public to spend holidays at home

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Arlington is using one family’s brush with the coronavirus as a warning to others who might be considering big get-togethers this Thanksgiving.

Alexa Aragonez told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that her family weighed the risks of catching the virus but decided to get together for a birthday party on Nov. 1.

A couple of days after the party, her 57-year-old mother, Enriqueta Aragonez, and others who were at the party began to feel sick. They got

tested, and all 12 who had attended were positive for COVID-19. Three other people with whom they had come in contact with also tested positive, said Alexa Aragonez, 26, who didn’t attend the party.

Arlington is using the family’s experience as part of a public awareness campaign to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus this holiday season by staying home.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is also warning people to not spend Thanksgiving with people from outside of their households and to not travel for the

holiday.

Statewide, the Texas health department on Sunday reported 8,554 new virus cases, more than 4,000 less than the state’s one-day high of 12,597 new virus cases a day earlier. The state on Sunday also reported 8,174 virus hospitalizations and 89 new deaths.

In a video that’s part of the campaign in Arlington, Enriqueta Aragonez is in her hospital and says, “I went to my nephew’s house and love seeing my family. But now I’m fighting against COVID-19.”

She is now recovering at home, and although

she doesn’t need supplemental oxygen, she still has pain in her lungs, Alexa Aragonez said. Most of the others who caught the virus at the party had milder symptoms, she said.

In the end, “not everyone is as lucky as my family has been,” Alexa told the Star-Telegram. She said she doesn’t want anyone to needlessly lose a family member.

“We were scared that my mother, the matriarch of the family, was going to pass,” she said. “So I think that fear in our hearts made us want to put an awareness in the hearts of others.”

GONZALEZ

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with resources raised through an inaugural golf tournament at Tierra Santa Golf Club in Weslaco on April 17, 2021. On

that day, the community will pay tribute and bear witness to the love Graciela’s expressed to others.

Que en paz descansa Graciela “Amazing Grace” Gonzalez. Rest in peace.

Francisco Guajardo, chief executive officer for the Museum of South Texas History at 200 N. Clossner Blvd. in Edinburg, authored this story as part of an ongoing series entitled Bearing

Witness. The museum’s effort aims to document some of the Rio Grande Valley lives lost to COVID-19. For more information about the museum, visit MOSTHistory.org.

REEF

From Page 3A

of 132 feet.

“We’re pretty excited about being able to reef around the Clipper, and we really would like to put about 5,000 tons out there,” Glick said. “There’s kind of like an optimal minimum amount that makes a difference.”

It’s all about creating shelter against predators so little fish can grow into big fish, to be caught by amateur and pro anglers alike, which translates into economic development for places with such resources. Alabama, with just 3.7% of the Gulf coastline, built a huge artificial reef that according to multiple studies generates between 37% and 47% of the Gulf’s red snapper catch each year and \$50 million to \$70 million in total annual economic impact for the state, Glick said.

“We can get close to

that,” he said.

The most recent estimate is that RGV Reef generates 240,000 baby fish a year, while anecdotal evidence from charter boat captains points to a big increase in the number of red snapper, Glick said.

“We made a major increase in the amount of nursery reef and have come up with a design that is much more durable, and the huge bump in the number of shorts,

TIPS FOR TROUT

- >> Use the right-sized hooks, smaller is better
- >> Use light line, perhaps with a fluorocarbon leader
- >> Use a three-way rig
- >> Use prepared baits, or even canned whole kernel corn
- >> Use a light-action rod and ultra-light reel

WHERE TO FISH

Harlingen Sports Complex, 3239 Wilson Road, stocking date is Feb. 4

LICENSES AND LIMITS

Daily bag limit is five trout, no minimum length

TWO RODS MAXIMUM

Anglers will need a valid fishing license with freshwater endorsement. Anglers under 17 are not required to have a license.

undersized fish, was apparent to everybody that fishes the reef this past year,” he said.

“The charter boat captains out there all want to help, and so we’re going to institute a tagging program starting in 2021 for these snapper so that we can better understand their growth rates, their life cycles, how many move off the reef, how many stay on the reef, how fast they grow, all of

these things.”

Friends plans to conduct the tagging study in partnership with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and is looking to fund graduate students — and smart phone — to keep track of the data, Glick said.

RGV Reef has been built at about a 10th of the cost of a normal reefing contract using donated “materials of opportunity” and even factoring in the high cost of transporting the materials offshore. But it all stops without donations. Friends welcomes “minnow and whale” sized contributions alike, and donors can be assured their dollars will go far thanks to the project’s cost efficiency, Glick said.

“We’ve got two more shrimp boats to name,” he said.

For more information visit rgvreef.org.

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PATROL

From Page 3A

>> Don’t drive and drive, make alternative plans;
>> Move Over or Slow Down for tow trucks, police, fire, EMS, and the Texas Department of Transportation vehicles

on the side of the road with emergency lights activated;

>> Buckle up everyone in the vehicle;
>> Slow down, with an emphasis in unfamiliar areas, construction zones, heavy traffic or bad weather;

>> Eliminate distractions while driving, including the usage of mobile devices;
>> Drive defensively;
>> Don’t drive fatigued;
>> Use the left lane for passing only on multi-lane roadways;
>> Steer It, Clear It if pos-

sible when involved in a non-injury crash;

>> Check your vehicle is properly maintained and ensure any cargo is secure;
>> Report road hazards or anything suspicious;
>> Monitor weather and road conditions wherever you are traveling.

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TWO THINGS POLICYHOLDERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR SETTLEMENTS

Recognize the distinction between the duty to defend and duty to indemnify.

First, the duty to defend and the duty to indemnify are different. The duty to defend is broad, and under many policies, if the insurer is obliged to defend any part of the allegations asserted against the policyholder, it must defend the entire case—even claims for which there is no potential for coverage. The duty to indemnify, on the other hand, is narrower. Generally, an insurer may not have to indemnify uncovered loss. Thus, while an insurer may have been defending the case, where the damages are allocable to particular claims, it may not agree to fund the portions allocated to uncovered claims. The facts of each case and the language in the policy at issue can greatly affect the outcome in these cases. Therefore, when negotiating a settlement, care should be taken, and consulting a coverage attorney may be beneficial.

Insurers may not place their own interests above the policyholder's.

Second, insurers typically have the right to settle a claim against their policyholder, but must consider the policyholder’s interests at least equal to their own interests when making settlement decisions. Moreover, if an insurer has the opportunity to settle within policy limits, failure to do so could constitute a breach of its duty of good faith and fair dealing and render the insurer liable for any excess judgments to which the policyholder is exposed.

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