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CROSS: Man journeys for ministry

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Erica Gonzalez carries Rene Balboa Sr.'s cross as he walks with his arm around Louis Escalona Jr. as Escalona joins him for a part of his walk from Cuero to Victoria. Although he was prepared to make the walk alone, others arrived to show their support and help carry the cross.

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Highway 87, Balboa and his supporters carried a 45-pound cross from Cuero to Faith Family Church in Victoria.

"The reason why I'm walking is to show all these street gang members that if I can be saved as a gang member from a Victoria prison gang, then they can be saved," he said.

Balboa joined a street gang when he was 15 years old, and at 25, he became a member of a prison gang until about 10 years ago.

When he found himself in trouble again and facing possible prison time, he heard a voice that turned him literally down the road he traveled Saturday.

"He showed me a vision of that cross," Balboa said, gesturing to the 8-foot by 6-foot cedar posts with two wheels attached to the bottom.

Balboa said God asked him to use the walk to start a street ministry to help gang members and drug users find their way to God.

"All this that's happened to your life, I'm using this," he said the voice told him. "Everything that you've been through, this is gonna bring glory to me."

Leaving Cuero at 7:30 a.m., Balboa walked alone with the cross. His wife and 4-year-old grandson, Aiden Gonzalez, followed slowly behind in an SUV.

Prepared to walk the entire length alone, Balboa was surprised by others who arrived to help him, taking a turn bearing the cross.

About 10:30 a.m., Erica Gonzalez, Aiden's grandmother, put the weight on her shoulder and trudged forward with a determined step, wanting to make it to the Nursery Trading Post.

"I believe you have to have faith, and you have to have hope, and that's why I'm here," she said.

As her body began to tire, Rick Cardenas, a stranger to Balboa before Saturday, bore the weight for her and continued toward Victoria after their rest.

"I've given my life to Christ, and it's bettered my life," Cardenas said. "Doing this is just a minute way of showing my appreciation."

Balboa said he plans to continue the walk after reaching Victoria, setting out for Port Lavaca on Sunday or Monday. From there, he will pass the weight onto anyone wanting to walk with the cross.

Although he planned to spread his message alone, he believes giving others a chance with the cross was what was meant to happen all along.

"Maybe it's just God's plan for unity," he said.



Erica Gonzalez, who suffers from fibromyalgia, said she felt no pain while she was carrying Balboa's cross for a stretch of the road from Cuero to Victoria.

PLAGIARISM

CONTINUED FROM B1

plagiarist of the modern era. Hernandez was the last person he plagiarized because she brought it to the attention of The New York Times editors.

A free screening of the documentary will be at 6 p.m. April 15 at the Victoria Fine Arts Center, 1002 Sam Houston Drive. After the screening, Hernandez and filmmaker Samantha Grant will have a conversation and answer questions about the scandal. The event is sponsored by UHV, the UHV School of Arts and Sciences, the Victoria Independent School District and the Victoria Advocate.

Hernandez was the Rio Grande Bureau chief for the San Antonio Express-News when she discovered Blair had plagiarized a story she wrote about a missing U.S. soldier in Iraq. She had written her story about the soldier, a Los Fresnos resident, a week before The New York Times story was published.

"My first thought when I read The New York Times story was 'Why didn't Jayson call me when he was here for his story because I totally would have helped him,'" she said about the journalist she had interned with in 1998 at The New York Times. "I read the first paragraph of his story and realized it was mine. The plagiarism was blatant."

At 8 a.m. the next day, she contacted her San Antonio Express-News editor to report the plagiarism. The next day, Hernandez learned the soldier was found dead, and his body was on its way back to the Rio Grande Valley. And within a couple of days, the story had exploded into a scandal that rocked the world's most prominent newspaper.

Hernandez said Blair stole more than just her words. He also stole the mother's peace when reporters descended on her house to ask about the scandal during the week she was burying her son.

"It's not just about plagiarism," she said. "Jayson created chaos in an already anguished-filled week for this mother.

At first, Hernandez was hesitant to be a part of the documentary.

"When Samantha approached me about doing an interview for the documentary, I wasn't sure what to make of it," she said. "I'd been interviewed by journalists from around the world and didn't know that I had anything else to say about the subject. I wondered what she could say that hadn't already been said."

Hernandez realized, though, that Grant was covering the story from a different perspective – one that dug deeper into the culture at The New York Times, Blair's mental illness and how the Internet was changing journalism. Grant covered the complicated scandal instead of just bits and pieces of the story like other reporters had, Hernandez said.

"This story has fascinated journalists for a long time because if it could happen at The New York Times, it could happen anywhere," she said.

Hernandez said newspaper editors across the country started looking into their own ethics policies and having conversations with staff members to make sure they understood what was expected of them. Editors also looked at the pros and cons of using anonymous sources and how to properly credit freelance writers.

Grant agreed the time of the scandal was interesting in the journalism field because the digital era was just blossoming, and it raised a new set of ethical considerations.

The journalism scandal piqued her interest in 2005 when she selecting a film thesis topic at the University of California, Berkeley.

"I wanted this film to open up conversations about media literacy and ethics and how the digital age was affecting both," she said.

Grant said it can be difficult to get the public to talk about media literacy, but by luring people in with a scandal, they seem more willing to discuss it. During these conversations, Grant has noticed three types of people who watch the film – those interested in Blair, the media scandal or mental illness.

Jeffrey Di Leo, dean of the UHV School of Arts and Sciences, said it is important the community discusses the national epidemic of plagiarism.

"We have a rare opportunity to talk about this topic with not only the filmmaker but also one of the key players in such an important lesson," he said.

Hernandez encouraged students, especially those in middle and high school, to attend the screening.

"There is a big problem of plagiarism at universities across the country," she said. "The sooner kids learn that it is wrong, the better.

FORT HOOD

CONTINUED FROM B1

argument" precipitated the assault. He declined to discuss the cause of the argument, but he said investigators believe Lopez made no effort to target specific soldiers – even though at least one of the soldiers shot was involved in the dispute.

Milley would not say whether those involved were among the dead or wounded or how many shooting victims had been a part of the argument.

"There was no premeditated targeting of an individual," he said.

However, the military has not established a "concrete motive" for Lopez's rampage, said Chris Grey, a spokesman for the Army's Criminal Investigation Command based in Quantico, Va.

And because Lopez is dead, he added, "the possibility does exist that we may never know why the alleged shooter did what he did."

Three of the wounded are still hospitalized in fair condition at Scott and White Memorial Hospital in Temple.

Investigators believe Lopez's mental condition was not the "direct precipitating factor" in the shooting, Milley said Friday, one day after he said that the condition appeared to be an underlying factor in the attack.

The crime scene encompasses two city blocks, Grey said.

Lopez began firing near an intersection, then traveled to several nearby buildings, went inside and kept firing. While driving to those locations in his vehicle, he fired indiscriminately at other soldiers, Grey said.

Grey also confirmed for the first time that the military police officer who confronted Lopez exchanged words with him before firing a single round at him that apparently missed. That's when the gunman put his .45-caliber semi-automatic pistol against his head and pulled the trigger one last time.

Authorities have interviewed more than 900 people in their investigation, Grey said.

Also Friday, Lopez's father said his son had struggled with the recent deaths of his mother and grandfather and the stress of being transferred to a new base.

LUNCH MENUS

For week of April 7-11

Milk and bread are served with each meal.

BLOOMINGTON ISD

- **Monday –** Corn dog, baked beans, corn, salad, fruit
- **Tuesday –** Chicken strips, mashed potato with gravy, green beans, salad, fruit
- **Wednesday –** Frito pie, pinto beans, broccoli salad, salad, crackers, fruit
- **Thursday –** Toasted ham and cheese, potato salad, carrots, salad, fruit
- **Friday –** Fish burger, spinach, sweet potato fries, fruit

CUERO ISD

- **Monday –** Chicken soft tacos, breaded-fish melt, breaded-buffalo chicken wrap, chicken salad platter, kickin' pintos, glazed carrots, applesauce
- **Tuesday –** Salisbury steak, barbecue pork rib, ham and cheese sandwich, popcorn chicken salad, mashed potatoes, green beans, sliced peaches
- **Wednesday –** Beef fingers, cheeseburger, ham and cheese wrap, ham chef salad, corn, garden salad, fruit
- **Thursday –** Chili mac, chicken nuggets, turkey and cheese sub, beef nacho salad, baby carrots, fresh broccoli, fruit
- **Friday –** Cheese pizza, popcorn chicken, potato bowl, ham and cheese wrap, all-American salad, corn, baby carrots, fruit

GOLIAD ISD

- **Monday –** Chicken nuggets with ketchup, whipped potatoes with gravy, sliced carrots, rosy applesauce, fruit, wheat rolls
- **Tuesday –** Spaghetti with meat sauce, green beans, house salad, sliced peaches, garlic toast
- **Wednesday –** Teriyaki chicken strips, steamed rice, steamed broccoli, green beans, Mandarin oranges
- **Thursday –** Beef and cheese nachos, refried beans, Spanish rice, lettuce and tomato salad, pineapple tidbits
- **Friday –** Chicken burger, sweet potato fries, burger salad, sliced pears

HALLETTSVILLE SACRED HEART

- **Monday –** Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, steamed carrots, fruit, bread
- **Tuesday –** Grilled cheese sandwich, broccoli bites, garden salad, fruit
- **Wednesday –** Beef taco pie, pinto beans, garden salad, fruit
- **Thursday –** Chicken on a bun, tater tots, garden salad, fruit
- **Friday –** Pizza sticks, carrots, garden salad, fruit

MEYERSVILLE ISD

- **Monday –** Salisbury steak, corn, sweet potatoes, brown gravy, sliced bread, fruit
- **Tuesday –** Chicken burger, whole-wheat hoagie bun, burger salad, carrot sticks, fruit
- **Wednesday –** Lasagna, cucumbers, sliced tomatoes, crackers, fruit
- **Thursday –** Hot dog on whole-wheat bun, onion rings, pickled okra, pretzels, fruit
- **Friday –** Beef stir fry with brown rice, cabbage, fruit

NAZARETH ACADEMY

- **Monday –** Sloppy joe, barbecue beans, corn on the cob, pickles, fruit
- **Tuesday –** Macaroni and cheese with ham, carrot sticks, lettuce and tomato, fruit
- **Wednesday –** Salisbury steak, spinach, rice, mixed vegetables, hot roll, fruit
- **Thursday –** Hot dog, pork and beans, tater tots, fruit
- **Friday –** Grilled cheese, lettuce, tomato, carrot sticks, fruit

NORTHSIDE BAPTIST SCHOOL

- **Monday –** Hamburger, lettuce and tomato, pears
- **Tuesday –** Chicken nuggets, noodles, okra, peaches
- **Wednesday –** Fish sticks, tater tots, wheat bread, strawberries
- **Thursday –** Barbecue chicken, cornbread, pinto beans, apple crisp
- **Friday –** Ham and turkey wrap, broccoli, blueberry buckle

NURSERY ISD

- **Monday –** Chicken and noodles, mashed potatoes, garden salad, rosy pears, dinner roll
- **Tuesday –** Frito pie, garden salad, green beans, fruit mix
- **Wednesday –** Sloppy joe, ranch beans, green peas, Mandarin oranges
- **Thursday –** Chicken tenders, green beans, golden corn, pears
- **Friday –** Pizza, buttered carrots, garden salad, pineapple tidbits

OUR LADY OF VICTORY

- **Monday –** Chicken-fried steak on bun or turkey and cheese sandwich, green beans, mixed fruit, rollup
- **Tuesday –** Chili dog or peanut butter and jelly substitute sandwich, ranch-style beans, fruit, chips
- **Wednesday –** Bean and cheese burrito or ham and cheese sandwich, Spanish rice, salad, peaches
- **Thursday –** Chicken spaghetti or tuna fish sandwich, peas, strawberries and pineapple, bread stick
- **Friday –** DoubleDave's cheese rolls, tossed salad, corn, ice cream

ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

- **Monday –** Chicken breast, egg noodles, mixed vegetables, salad, fruit
- **Tuesday –** Mini corn dogs, fries, salad, peaches, cookie
- **Wednesday –** Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, green beans, salad, Jell-O with fruit
- **Thursday –** Crispitos with chili, pinto beans, salad, pudding, fruit
- **Friday –** Bean chalupas, corn, salad, fruit, ice cream

VICTORIA ISD

- **Monday –** Beef sloppy joe, breaded-chicken sandwich, sweet potato fries, green peas, juice, fruit
- **Tuesday –** Pizza square, chicken spaghetti, tossed salad, spinach, peaches, fruit
- **Wednesday –** Steak fingers, chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, applesauce, fruit
- **Thursday –** Chicken fajitas, barbecue sandwich, Spanish rice, pinto beans, corn, fruit cocktail, juice
- **Friday –** Sausage roll, fisherman's platter, carrots, broccoli, pears with cherries, Blue Bell rainbow freeze

WESTHOFF ISD

- **Monday –** Salisbury steak, gravy, corn on the cob, green beans, peach cobbler
- **Tuesday –** Spaghetti and meat sauce, cheese bread stick, salad, Mandarin oranges
- **Wednesday –** Sausage on a stick, sweet rice, marinated cucumbers, beets, banana pudding
- **Thursday –** King Ranch chicken, salad, garlic bread, corn, fresh fruit
- **Friday –** Fish sticks, broccoli and cheese, potato salad, strawberry Jell-O

