

ART OF LIVING

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VISITING THE PAST



— ODIE ARAMBULA —

Lula B. Lacey linked to Little Theatre

A handwritten note from Lula Bryant Lacey stirred conversation about the history of Laredo Little Theatre as detailed in a Laredo Times article retrieved from the newspaper archives.

In a March 1960 microfilm of The Times, information attributed to Laredoan Hector Sanchez details the beginnings of Laredo Little Theatre, now an institution in local fine arts. According to the Sanchez material, Laredo Little Theatre got its start around 1920, although the town had experienced bits and pieces of stage productions since the late 1890s.

One of the earliest productions actually was a stage presentation that became part of the inaugural celebration in honor of George Washington's birthday. It went down in history as the start of the Washington's Birthday Celebration in 1898 under the auspices of the Improved Order of the Red Men. One of the organizers of the Red Men was the founder of this newspaper, James Saunders Penn.

The archived material tells that Laredo Little Theatre was the brainchild of a professional actor named William Morgan.

This writer hit on the early beginnings of Laredo Little Theatre as a result of the handwritten note, dated June 18, 2006, from Lula Bryant Lacey. The name of Lula Bryant is cited in the 1960 Times article about the Little Theatre. She was very much a part of the organization's early years.

Early photos

The brief note from Lula Bryant Lacey included a copy of a picture that showed two palm trees on the Matamoros side of the downtown Federal Building (post office) against a background of the landmark Hamilton Hotel building across Salinas Avenue. The picture shows a flagpole next to one of the palm trees at the entrance of the building that formerly housed the U.S. District Court and other federal government offices. The ground floor houses the downtown postal station.

Lula Bryant Lacey wrote: "My mother told me that my father, Richard C. Bryant, and George Hatley planted these two palms at the Post Office. Later, Rex Shanks repeated the story to me."

Shanks was a leading realtor who conducted business out of an office at the former Hamilton Hotel at Salinas and Matamoros. Shanks was a contributing writer for The Laredo Times for years. His daughter, Ann, was a history and language arts teacher who also sponsored the Martin High School newspaper (The Journal). She spent time researching the history of Laredo and Laredoans. She was an excellent photographer as well. Her photojournalism work subsequently was published and became part of modern-day Webb County Heritage Foundation material.

According to Mrs. Lacey, the palm trees were planted in 1917. "The Post Office was built in 1907. Next year will be one hundred years the Post Office was built. The picture is a copy of a postcard I picked up at the Central Drug Store many, many years ago."

In that 1960 Times article, Lula Bryant (later to become Mrs. B.B. Lacey) was described as one of the best in the field of dance. She was characterized as "generous with her dance talent" and helped to stage the "shows for benefits and other worthy purposes."

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A collection of Martin High School yearbooks, known as La Pitahaya, sit at the school's library.

Photos by Cuate Santos | Laredo Morning Times

HISTORY IN THE BOOKS

Raquel Cruz scans in a Martin High School yearbook at Border Title Group with Evan Quiros. The two have been working on the online collection since late spring.



Photo by Theresa Scarbrough | Laredo Morning Times

Local businessman compiles collection of Martin High School memories

By TRICIA CORTEZ
 LAREDO MORNING TIMES

One morning about four months ago, Evan James Quiros was at his computer and did a search on eBay for Martin High School.

"On a lark, I was thinking about my old high school days and wondering where some girlfriend I used to have is now," Quiros said with a laugh.

His search led him to a 1937 annual of the Pitahaya, the name given to the Martin High yearbook. Pitahaya, also spelled pitaya, is the fruit of several cactus species native to Mexico, Jamaica, Cuba and other parts of Latin America.

Quiros, a 1961 Martin High graduate, was the only bidder on the annual and bought it for \$15 from its California owner who, he said, got it in an estate sale.

The purchase would lead Quiros on a journey to find Pitahaya annuals from 1916 to the present, and to scan them so that they would be free and available to the public on his business Web site, www.bordertitle.com/pitahaya.

"1937 was a banner year because that was

the change from the Posada location downtown to the present Martin High School location," Quiros said. "When I opened the annual, it showed the two schools."

He finished the scanning project last week, but the collection is not yet complete.

Missing annuals

"My goals are to get the collection complete, and to find out where the high school was before La Posada," he said.

If there are any annuals for that location, Quiros would like to scan and add them to the online collection.

At present, the following Pitahayas are missing: 1959, 1983, 1993, 1994 and 1997.

Eight other volumes are also missing, but Quiros believes they were never produced — the 1918 and 1919 annuals because of World War I, and 1951 to 1956 because of the Great Depression.

1937 discovery

Upon receiving the 1937 annual in the mail, Quiros noticed all of the senior high pictures had been ripped out, but he also noticed

that his father had signed the book.

"I thought that maybe dad had been a senior, so I went and asked him," he said.

"He said no, that he just hung around the school because that's where the girls were," Quiros said. "So I got interested in other annuals to find pictures of my father and aunt (the late Nina Quiros), who had also signed the annual."

Quiros' curiosity led him to the Laredo Public Library, "but they only had a few."

He finally found "the mother lode" at the Martin High library.

Mother lode

"I realized they keep them under double and triple lock, and that nobody can really access them," Quiros said.

The Laredo developer and landowner thought he could scan the annuals online, "since what we do at the office is scan public records."

With the help of former LISD Board President Dennis Cantu, Quiros was able to approach and get permission from outgoing Principal Roberto "Bobby" Gonzalez.

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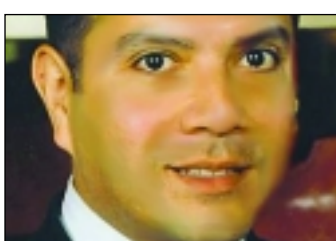
SURFING THE CITY

Plenty graces the stage this summer

The summer days may be going by pretty fast for those who are enjoying vacation time, yet not fast enough for those trying to brave our increasingly warm weather. Some Laredoans are escaping the heat to cooler climates to the north.

No matter where you are it is important to keep yourself hydrated. I feel for our "new" Laredoans who must still get accustomed to our weather, among other things. We must always look at the bright side and consider the fact we are not experiencing floods or tornadoes.

We also have a lot of activities planned for the next few weeks in Laredo. Some very talented individuals will take to the stage for the next three week-



— GABRIEL CASTILLO —

ends. If you're in town you will certainly want to make plans to attend these outstanding performances.

Magical performances

A large group of young people are keeping cool rehearsing for a variety of performances which will take to the stage in the next few weeks. Among those are the

cast of Laredo Institute for Theatrical Education (LITE) Productions of Cinderella and Aladdin.

Make plans for a family outing to see these young talented actors who will be performing the weekends of July 9 and July 21-23 at the Laredo Civic Center. Shows start at 7 p.m.

Today's matinee performance begins at 3 p.m. as will the matinee show on Sunday, July 23. Admission to the shows is \$7 for both performances or \$5 for one performance.

Peggy Phelps is directing the Aladdin play while Tacee Walters makes her directorial debut in the presentation of Cinderella. Tickets are available at Elmo Lopez Music Store or Netscorp.

Jets and Sharks at LCC

Another cast of talented singers, dancers and actors will also take to the stage at the Laredo Community College Martinez Fine Arts Center with their presentation of West Side Story. Performances begin Thursday, July 13 through Saturday, July 15 at 8 p.m. A matinee performance will also take place on Sunday, July 16 at 3 p.m. Tickets will be sold at the door at \$10 per person or \$5 with student I.D.

Another note on music

Another occasion to enjoy air conditioned comfort and beautiful music will be coming up the latter part of this month. Mark your calendars for Sunday, July

23, at 5 p.m. when Texas A & M International University will unveil the latest addition to the fine arts department with a formal recital.

The Corrigan-Sharkey organ a gift from the E. H. Corrigan Foundation will feature guest artist Dr. David Heller of San Antonio's Trinity University.

For additional information, call the Office of Public Relations, Marketing and Information Services at (956) 326.2180, visit offices in Killam Library 268, send e-mail to prmis@tamui.edu or click on tamui.edu

Admission to the event is free of charge and the public is urged to arrive early, as seating will be limited.

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