

Remarks by Mayor Phil Hardberger

Made Monday, September 3, 2007 at the
Mass of the Resurrection for Deacon Enrique M. Barrera (1937-2007)
At San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio

[To] Leti, Enrique, Leticia, other family members and friends.

On behalf of myself, Mayor Garza, Mayor Peak, Councilwoman Herrera and the people of San Antonio, we are sorry for your great loss. I have ordered the flags over City Hall and all other City buildings to be flown at half-staff today in honor of Enrique.

We are also sorry for ourselves, for Enrique was a warm and caring man who enriched everyone's life who knew him.

He had a gentle soul, an active mind, and a body and a heart absolutely dedicated to public service at the federal, state, and local levels. It would be impossible to know how many lives he touched and changed.

That will be his legacy and it's one we all could aspire to.

[To] David Garza and Pablo Escamilla. I know your hearts are hurting today, along with Enrique's many other friends. I always think of you as the three that changed the Edgewood school district—putting education where it should be—*first*. The three of you, with Leti's help cleaned house and gave a priority and focus to a district badly needing help. I hope you and Leti will take consolation for the historic and intellectual change you made in that school board as trustees and guardians of those children's future and by extension, all San Antonio children.

The first block walking that Linda and I ever did in San Antonio was with the four of you in Edgewood. Enrique's leadership and all of your commitment to quality education and better housing deeply impressed me. Thirty years now have gone by, but I remember yet the conversation in Enrique and Leti's living room about the obligation of providing a quality education to raise our children—the children of Edgewood—so they could have a better life.

Enrique was right. You were all right. I learned from you all in that effort. Thank you for giving me that opportunity as well as the opportunity to speak today.

Enrique Barrera had a bit of a saint in him, I always thought. I'm sure he would be embarrassed to hear that, but it's a thought that occurred to me more than once.

His demeanor was so gentle, his reasoning so sound, his dedication to the poor and less fortunate and his spirituality all came together in Enrique to make him a special person. A person San Antonio can be proud of.

I was impressed a couple of weeks ago, Leti, when I visited with you and your son at Santa Rosa Hospital with how serene Enrique was. For those of us who fear death, as most people do, Enrique's composure was calming and reassuring.

The community of San Antonio has lost a great spirit and a great leader in Enrique Barrera. Enrique was a humble man whose service to the community was given for all of the right reasons.

Those who worked alongside Enrique praised him with words such as: solid, dependable, dignified, diligent, respectful, elegant, ethical, committed...a statesman.

Enrique was a quiet leader, but an effective one. He was passionate, yet achieved results in an understated manner.

Enrique had an intuitive empathy for struggling families, likely based on his experience as the child of migrant parents, which was strengthened by his work first as a teacher and later as school board member in Edgewood.

On City Council, Enrique was an early supporter of a program to help low-income folks earn federal tax credits, he sought to register young people to vote and he was one of the first on City Council to argue that the City must step up its role in education. Enrique's message was heard and followed. This year, the City will spend \$100 million of City funds to support and improve our children's education.

His teaching background and work at the Texas Workforce Commission made him the Council's most knowledgeable members on the importance of education and job training. Enrique repositioned our thinking: from simple economic development to focusing our efforts on gaining higher education, skills and training.

He was a man who fought to make San Antonio prosper by elevating skill levels—that is a great legacy. But what touched each one of us most was his **character**.

Above all, Enrique valued service to others, and that extended beyond politics. His was a life dedicated to service of all kinds, from his early work as a teacher and organizers to his time at the Texas Workforce Commission, to his position as permanent Deacon at San Fernando Cathedral.

He played a leadership role here as well, helping to see itself as more than a place for spiritual ministering, masses and weddings, but vital community organization in the heart of the city. Enrique pushed for San Fernando's health fairs, and more social services, a vision in keeping with his consistent philosophy of leading through helping others.

Enrique was a man who **lived his values**. He considered his wife, Leticia, his partner, and was rarely seen without her. He was a companion and friend to his two children, and he doted on his grandchildren. He lived in a modest home in a modest neighborhood for his entire life. He sought nothing for himself. He devoted his life and his talents toward making our community better and stronger. There is no better measure of a life well lived.

We miss you, Enrique. We will continue to miss you.

But we remember what you did and the countless people you helped, and know we were blessed.

You, of saintly presence, are among the saints now.

Well done, good and faithful servant.