



# PANAMERICANA

## 2008 GRADUATION



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Desiree Gutierrez, Editor



Thirty six Presbyterian Pan American School students graduated on May 17, 2008 at the school's chapel.

Guillermo Castro was named the 2008 valedictorian and Andrea Larraga was the salutatorian. Castro's speeches addressed responsibility, family, friendship and the future.

Senior speakers Jenay Zelaya and Benjamin Manzano spoke of family, friendships and God.

2008 graduates include Eli Aguado, Gildardo Avendano, Gabriela Brito, Victor Carrillo, Alberto Castrejon, Guillermo Castro, Luis Castro, Mariana Cavazos, Antonio Cavazos, Juan Daniel Cavazos, Glenda DeAnda, Zenia DeAnda, Vanessa Ebiaca, Nisse Fonseca, Rolando Garcia, Carlos Garza, Raquel Godinez, Jesus Herrera, Josephine Johnson, Andrea Larraga, Hyojin Lee, Jang Gyoon Lee, Jenny Liang, Benjamin Manzano,

Alejandra Murguia, Alejandro Nunez, Hector Pedraza, Victor Perez, Elizabeth Ramirez, Jose Leonardo Reyes, Edgarth Rivera, Juan Saldivar, Otila Santos, Jesus Trevino, Ian Vargas and Jenay Zelaya.

Gildardo, Guillermo, Antonio, Juan Daniel, Raquel, Andrea, Hyojin and Edgarth received Honors Diploma. These students received honors by taking four math and science classes, having a TOEFL score of at least 550, an 85 plus average and no disciplinary problems.

Seven graduates were members of the National Honor Society and eight attended classes at Coastal Bend College in Kingsville.

Dr. James Matthews, President of PPAS, provided the welcome; Rev. Ed Seeger imparted the invocation and Roberto Moreno, teacher, read a scripture at the ceremony.

Matthews, Dr. Eugene Tims, Chair of Board of Trustees, and Dr. Barbara Stottlemeyer, Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, presented five awards.

The Berta Murray Award was granted to Raquel, Skinner/McLane Presidents to Benjamin, Elena Reisner Eagle to Andrea, Student of the Year to Elisa Godinez and Teacher of the Year to Nancy Phaup.

Matthews and Tims awarded the diplomas and Ellie Perez, school counselor, presented certificates to students who earned college credits.

The Rev. Dr. Jesse Leos led the prayer and charge to the graduates and The Rev. Hazael Campuzano, Trustee, concluded with the benediction.

The class joined in a circle after the ceremony, as Class President Jenay led a final prayer, a long standing tradition for Pan Am graduates.

# TEENS ON THEIR KNEES

## ~GUEST WRITER: DR. EUGENE F. TIMS

Guest Writer for the President's Corner is Dr. Eugene F. Tims, Chair of the Board of Trustees

*This article was also published in the Presbytery of South Louisiana newsletter*

This was the scene May 17 at Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas. The graduates want one last prayer together before leaving school. One graduate is from Africa, one from Guatemala, two from Korea, the rest from Mexico. At the baccalaureate service the night before, they were asked: "1. Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world? (response: I Do.), 2. Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in His grace and love? (response: I Do.), and 3. Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying Christ's word and showing His love? (response: I will with God's help.)"

They have completed four years of high school and met all requirements

of Texas and PPAS. They are fluent in written and oral English and will do well in colleges and universities of their choice. They frequently have winning animals in the local 4-H competition. The Soccer team won the state championship. Many seniors



take college courses. Bible study is an integral part of the curriculum. The choir visits a number of Churches.

PPAS is a mission project of the Synod of the Sun. In 1956, the Texas-Mexican Industrial Institute (for boys) was merged with the Presbyterian School for Mexican Girls to form a co-educational Pan-American pro-

gram. Of PPAS' 700 acres, 640 came from Mrs. H.M. King (daughter of the first Presbyterian missionary of the Rio Grande) supplemented by the Chamber of Commerce of Kingsville. Accepted then by the Synod and later deeded to the Board of Trustees of PPAS.

MISSION: PPAS is a college preparatory school, grounded in Christian love and service, for young people from the Americas and beyond. Our mission is to challenge students academically, spiritually, emotionally, and physically in order to prepare them for lives that demonstrate Leadership, Inquiry, Faith, and Enterprise (LIFE). PPAS is accredited by the Southeastern Association of Colleges and Schools. The faculty is evaluated by the Texas state Professional Development and Appraisal System. Passing the TOEFL test is a requirement for graduation.

Currently PPAS is undertaking a major reconstruction and enrollment expansion program.

# SCHOLARSHIP PROFILE

## ~ZIAN RIVERA



When Zian Rivera's father asked her if she wanted to study in the United States, she replied yes, but never really believed that she would soon

be attending an American school.

Now going into her senior year, Zian describes her international study as an experience of a lifetime.

"At the beginning I thought that I couldn't come here because of the money," said Zian, of Oaxaca, Mexico. "But I prayed to God and told him that if he wants me to go to the U.S., I would come. I felt that it was a sign. A sign and God was saying this is

your way."

For Zian, the signs did not stop there. Pan Am offered her a full scholarship.

"It's definitely God's will. He wants me to be here," she said.

Zian, the oldest of four girls, arrived for IEP (Intensive English Program) in July.

"I was very nervous and scared," Zian said. "I walked into the dining hall and there were many people. I didn't eat."

Zian's first day jitters have faded and now she describes Pan Am as a family.

"The students and teachers and staff support me," Zian said. "They don't have to do it because they are not my family but they do."

Zian is part of the Worship Committee and her favorite class this year was writing with Lillian Johnston.

"I learned a lot. She is patient with us and explains it," Zian said. "She is a good teacher and cares."

After she graduates in May 2009, Zian plans to attend college but is undecided whether she will study in the U.S. or Mexico. She has narrowed her career choices down to psychology or education.

"When I think of my goals, it has never leaned towards study," she said. "It's my Christian life, my relationship with God that I think of. I want to help the church and help do God's job. My father, because he is a pastor has been more that way."

## EMPLOYEE RETIRES AFTER 18 YEARS ~RITA GONZALEZ

Rita Gonzalez started working at Presbyterian Pan American School 18 years ago but was no stranger to the campus her first day on the job. Pan Am had been her home for many years since she first arrived as a student in 1956. This year marked the first generation for co-ed students.

"I liked being at Pan Am. It was a different experience," she said.

Prior to the transition to Kingsville, she was attending Presbyterian School for Mexican Girls in Taft, which was combined with Tex-Mex to form Pan Am.

Rita, of Corpus Christi, started at Pres-Mex at age 14 when her mother became ill.

"I needed a home and saw the girls from Pres-Mex sing at my church in Corpus," she said. "I asked Miss (Berta) Murray what it took to go to that school and she said, 'nothing come on over.'"

Now from student to employee and



after several positions and countless departments, Rita has retired.

"It seemed like the right time to retire and I want to move to Irving to be closer to my family," she said. "I love this job but I feel it's time for someone else to take over. It's a good choice I made and good timing."

After Rita graduated from Pan Am in 1960, she attended Texas Women's University in Denton for one year. She moved back to Kingsville and attended Texas A&I University and then transferred to a nursing school in Houston. She worked as an LVN-

Surgical Technologist in Dallas for 18 years before returning to Pan Am.

After 30 years, Rita found herself back at what she refers to as her home. She returned in January of 1990 as a dorm parent and worked with entering school president Elena Reisner.

Rita has had the chance to work as executive secretary for the president and Director of Admissions and Immigration, which is where she was working before her retirement.

"I loved this school as a kid and needed it," she said. "I needed a home at the time, found a home here and I welcomed it."

For Gonzalez she said she will miss her co-workers the most.

"My co-workers mean a lot to me and I will miss them. They gave me respect the whole time I was here even as a student. I love this school and I really wanted Pan Am to be a part of me before I died."

## TEACHER RETIRES AFTER 30 YEARS ~ROBERTO MORENO

Social Studies teacher Roberto Moreno has coached three cross country championship teams, five individual medalists and conducted the first over night senior trip during his 30 years at Presbyterian Pan American School.

"I don't need a camera to take pictures because my fondest memories will be with me forever," he said.

And now, after teaching Hispanic history, U.S. government, U.S history, world history economics and world religions, Roberto has put away his well-known chalk and memorable lectures and has retired.

"I decided to retire because I realized I have more years behind me than ahead of me and now I will enjoy my last years of life doing things I've always wanted to do such as relaxing, drinking coffee, watching old movies



and staying informed with news channels," Roberto said.

Before Roberto became part of Pan Am, he worked at Coastal Bend Youth City as a dorm parent. While working there, he was also pursuing a bachelor's degree in political science and history from Texas A&I University-Kingsville. He also has a master's degree in education.

Moreno began applying for teaching jobs at local schools including

Pan Am. He applied on a Friday and began working the following Monday in August of 1978.

"When I first arrived, I was anxious but the students held the door open and I knew I was home," he said. "I was impressed by their politeness and how respectful they were. It was a good combination."

In 1999, Roberto was the first to receive the Teacher of the Year Award at Pan Am.

"I felt that my job has been worthwhile. I will never lose contact with Pan Am. I will substitute and help at cross country and track practice. I will miss the students the most because I learned to respect them. I was a service to them in any way that I could be."

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT ~OLIVIA PUN

Hei-Tung (Olivia) Pun, 18-year-old at Presbyterian Pan American School, knows that God is in her life.

"I know God has been there because he got me here. It's not that simple to come here to the U.S. and to be on my own," she said. "I know the existence of God and it made me feel confident in myself."

The Hong Kong native did not necessarily travel to Pan Am from Asia. Before coming to the U.S., Pun and her family of father Edmond, mother Amy and sister Christina, whom have all given themselves American names, moved to Costa Rica.

The Pun family decided to move to another country in 1997 after Hong Kong returned to China. Olivia was 13 at the time.

Olivia's parents own their own Chinese restaurants and have moved them from Hong Kong to Costa Rica.

Since Olivia has been studying English most of her life, she attended an American school in Costa Rica.

"But I still knew I would have more opportunities in the United States,"

Olivia said.

It wasn't until Olivia's sister traveled to Austin to attend college that she would hear of the college preparatory school located in South Texas, known as Pan Am.



"I went on the website and read up on the school and decided to apply," she said. "My first time here was when I came here for IEP (Intensive English Program) in the summer."

At 17, Olivia remembers her first day vividly.

"I walked into the girls dormitory and I was the only girl there," she said. "I went to take a shower and didn't know that you had to wait a while before the water got hot. Needless to say, I took my first shower in the

United States with cold water."

Still, with Olivia off to a rough start, she enjoys attending Pan Am and looks forward to her senior year.

"The people are really nice and warm here," she said. "I get to be independent and depend on myself instead of my parents."

During her junior year, she was inducted into National Honor Society.

"I am proud of myself. I was able to get into NHS and it's an honor. I am able to show my parents that I am here doing fine and well," she said.

After graduation, Olivia hopes to attend a U.S. college to study veterinary. Whichever school it is, one thing is for sure — she is aiming for that full scholarship.

"I study when I have to and know when I need to," she said. "I don't consider myself an intelligent student but I study hard to achieve good grades and try to stay on top of everything. I especially know what I should and should not do and I do whatever I have to do."

## SENIORS RECEIVE TOP AWARDS

Each year at Presbyterian Pan American School, faculty are asked to nominate recipients for five distinguished awards, which are announced at the graduation ceremony.

The five awards are the Skinner/McLane President's Award, Berta Murray Award, Elena Reisner Eagle Award, Student of the Year and Teacher of the Year.

At the 2008 commencement, Senior Benjamin Manzano was given the Skinner/McLane President's Award. This award is presented to the graduate who best demonstrates a positive attitude in every aspect of the school's program of worship, study and work.

The Berta Murray Award was given

to Senior Raquel Godinez this year. This unique award is presented to a senior girl who best exemplifies the ideals of service, academic excellence, and spiritual growth. It is given in honor of Miss Berta Murray, the former president of the Presbyterian School for Mexican Girls.

This year, the Elena Reisner Eagle Award was given to Senior Andrea Larraga. The recipient of this award is chosen on the basis of overall leadership potential including Christian character and service, academic stability, personal integrity, future educational plans, reputation among and regard of peers including leadership positions elected by peers. Andrea was this year's Student Council President

and 2008 Class Salutatorian with the second highest scholastic average for three high school years.

The Student of the Year Award is typically presented to a student who is not a senior—one who best represents the mission of Pan American School. This student demonstrates stability in academic endeavors, leadership in worship, responsible citizenship in the Pan American community and leadership in activities that enhance the lives of all the members of the Pan Am family. The award was given to Junior Elisa Godinez.

The Teacher of the Year Award was given to Nancy Phaup, who teaches English. Nancy was also the adviser of National Honor Society.

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## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT ~LILLIAN JOHNSTON

After being at Presbyterian Pan American School for six years, teaching English as a Second Language, English II, III, IV and AP English Lillian Johnston left to care for her 17-year-old grandson, who had been in a car accident.

"I felt terrible. It killed me to leave the students and the teachers," Lillian said. "It was very stressful but I thank God that he was in control and gave us jobs and a house and everything."

Shortly after she left Pan Am, she found a position teaching intensive English and history in Tyler near two of her three daughters.

After two years, she moved to Houston and taught intensive English at Houston Baptist University.

Now Lillian has returned to Pan Am after five years and is teaching English II/III and TOEFL tutoring.

She returned to Kingsville and Pan



Am in the spring of 2007 because her husband of 47 years, Bill, a former Pan Am teacher, wanted to retire in this area.

"I think it is an honor to teach at Pan Am," she said, "because of the involvement I get to have with international students and knowing that their parents would trust me to teach English and values to their children."

"They trust me with two to three years of care. It's quite an honor and a huge responsibility," she said.

Lillian, who has nine grandchildren of her own describes her students as her own children and grandchildren. Her students are wonderful and hard working, she said.

"Seeing the students achieve greater success in their studies is the thing that I like the most about being a teacher," Lillian said.

"Most of my students seem as if they are willing to learn. And they are respectful, which is why I like to teach international students," she said.

Lillian has published five books through the Church of the Nazarene denomination and she is currently working on a grammar book for Spanish speaking students with Dr. Jaya Goswami, former Pan Am teacher.