

## The Border Studies Archive is UTPA's newest source for research

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Posted: 01/10/2011

The Border Studies Archive at The University of Texas-Pan American Library recently served as a valuable research setting for San Francisco-based film maker Richard Lee Garcia, who hopes to one day produce a film based on the folklore, "The Devil in the Dance Hall."



UTPA Border Studies Archive Curator and Assistant Professor of Psychology and Anthropology Dr. Margaret Dorsey, pictured left, stands next to Richard Lee Garcia, a San Francisco-based film maker who used the archive to research information for a film project on which he is working.

Garcia said the accounts of the story found in the archive will help him better tell the story that mesmerized him as a teen growing up in Weslaco and has intrigued those with whom he has shared the story.

"I remember this story from childhood, and I've always remembered the story. I first read it in *The Monitor* in 1979 at the age of 13," Garcia said. "I believe this is a fantastic story, so it makes sense to make a film on a story that deserves to be told."

This folklore has various versions of the incident, but two of the places it is said to have occurred are San Antonio and McAllen, Texas. The folklore tells the tale of a young woman who disobeys her parents and goes against the beliefs of her religion for a night of dancing. At the dance hall she meets a mysterious man, said to be the devil, who offers her a dance. She accepts his offer, but at night's end, her scream fills the dance hall as she notices the man's legs transform, one into the leg of a chicken, the other having a hoof. She faints and meets her death that night and the mystery man disappears leaving the smell of sulfur behind. Some say this was her punishment for her disobedience.

Garcia's interest in this story led him to The Border Studies Archive, which opened November 2010 and includes research and notes compiled by UTPA anthropologist professor Dr. Mark Glazer, now retired, and his students, on the accounts of the night the devil appeared at the dance hall. Dr. Margaret Dorsey, Border Studies Archive curator and assistant professor of psychology and anthropology, said Glazer's collection has more than 100,000 files of Rio Grande Valley and Mexican-American folklore and has been appraised to be valued at approximately \$1 million.

"The purpose of this archive is to attract national attention to the border studies collection and the UTPA library," Dorsey said. "It's great that Richard is our first out of town guest to start research for a major film project. We can say it started here at the Border Studies Archive."

Garcia said his phone call to the University library and points of contact led him to the Border Studies Archive. He wants to take the information he collects from the archive's Glazer Collection and turn it into a dramatized screenplay opposed to a documentary.

"These archives are a treasure trail of information and to me a documentary would limit how this story could be told," Garcia said. "So I want a screenplay based on facts and the truth about how the tale became so widespread."

The Border Studies Archive has an expanding collection of border folklore and culture files, music and films. The archive started with the Mark Glazer Collection, but now includes the Border Wall Collection donated by Scott Nicol and Stephanie Herwick, leaders of the No Border Wall movement; the Border Music Collection donated by Dr. Catherine Ragland, UTPA assistant professor of ethnomusicology, which is composed of interviews with Spanish artists including Ramon Ayala, and copies of their music; and the Spanish Land Grant collection, created through a collaborative project with the Community Historical Archeological Project with Schools (CHAPS) led by UTPA professors Dr. Russell Skowronek, history and anthropology; and Dr. Sonia Hernandez, history and philosophy. The Spanish Land Grant collection includes student work on oral histories, reports and catalogued land titles from local court houses. Research on the border wall and border security by Dorsey and Dr. Miguel Diaz-Barriga, professor of anthropology, will also be found within collections.

"This collection will not only provide research for students and faculty to use for their projects, but this collection was started through student research, so it is also a place to house and spotlight student work," Dorsey said. "We want the UTPA community, as well as residents of the Rio Grande Valley, to know that we are here and we welcome opportunities to collaborate."

The Border Studies Archive is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is located on the third floor of the UTPA Library.