

## Fans Make Selena Pilgrimage

### Mourners Flock to Coffin, Motel, Studio and Home

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**CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas** – Thousands of emotional mourners said goodbye to their Tejano queen on Sunday, winding their way along the city's picturesque bay into the convention center where the body of Selena Quintanilla Perez lay in a closed black coffin surrounded by white roses.

In a procession reminiscent of a Good Friday pageant, hundreds of mourners continued their pilgrimage, retracing the final steps of the singer who would have turned 24 on Easter Sunday.

Adding to burgeoning shrines at every stop, they paused outside her home, her recording studio and finally Room 158 of the Days Inn motel where she was shot.

Some mourners swore they could see the imprint of Selena in the freshly cleaned carpet of the motel lobby, where the young singer fell, bleeding.

Many people who paid their respects spoke of angels and saints who would watch over Selena in heaven.

Although Selena and her family are Jehovah's Witnesses, many of her throng of Hispanic fans are Catholic.

The door to the motel room where Selena was shot Friday had become a shrine with flowers, letters and candles bearing photos of the Virgin of San Juan. Admirers who traveled from across Texas and northern Mexico used red and pink lipstick to write messages to the slain artist on the windows of the room.

A fence surrounding Selena's home had been covered the previous day with flowers, signs and sympathy cards, and religious candles had been placed in the family's driveway.

Some explained their fascination with the north side Days Inn – site of the killing – by saying they felt closer to the singer when they walked in what they believe to be her last footsteps.

"She was really important in the Hispanic community, and this just happens when there's a tragedy like this," said Sandra Castro, a Houston receptionist. "We (Hispanics) are one big family, and this is our way to show our unity."

Motel employees declined to comment but calmly tolerated the constant traffic through the lobby and around the parking lot.

Margie Rodriguez and her family from San Antonio fell silent as they approached the area of the floor where they believe Selena collapsed after being shot in the back – allegedly by her personal assistant, Yolanda Saldivar.

Standing briefly in a semicircle around a freshly cleaned carpet, some mourners appeared to pray while others pointed and whispered to each other about what they saw.

"You could see where she lay," Rodriguez said. "You could see a pattern where her whole body was. I took a picture of it."

Like many other fans, Rodriguez said she drove to Corpus Christi in hopes of seeing the singer one last time and taking a casket photo to remember her by. They arrived at the Bayfront Convention Center to find that their film would be confiscated and the casket would be closed.

“We were really disappointed. We just want to see her to know that it’s true – that she really died,” Rodriguez said.

It was that kind of doubt and suspicion that prompted Selena’s family to open the casket around 8 p.m., just an hour before the public visitation ended.

A family friend told The Associated Press the decision followed some admirers’ unfounded speculation that the singer’s body was not inside.

Inside the black-lacquered coffin, Selena’s body was clothed in the purple satin costume she wore to last year’s Grammy Awards.

The coffin was surrounded by 5,000 white rose from Holland, flown in the night before by Q Productions, the singer’s production company. A single red rose was placed in the casket with Selena, said Joel Evans of Seaside Memorial Park & Funeral Home.

Mourners had begun lining up outside the convention center at 4 a.m., and by midafternoon, 10,000 had filed past Selena’s casket.

Selena’s family originally planned to have a public funeral Monday at the Bayside Coliseum but changed their minds Saturday after hearing reports that fans had broken into Selena’s San Antonio boutique, Selena Etc.

Employees of the salon confirmed fans had tripped the shop’s alarm several times over the weekend but said nothing was stolen. They characterized the break-in as unintentional, saying fans were pushing to get a look inside.

“They were going to have a public funeral, but when that happened, they just wanted to calm everyone down,” Evans said. “There’s been a constant flow of people here, at the home, the studio, the funeral home, the motel, and the family hasn’t slept.”

Evans said more than 400 people attended a family-and-friends-only funeral Saturday night. A second funeral was planned today.

“The family is still in shock,” Evans said. “Mr. Quintanilla is a very private person, and he feels that it’s time for her stardom to be put to rest.”

Tony Cavazos Bruni, a friend of the Quintanilla family, said Sunday that Selena’s father decided to make today’s service private in an effort to keep it “as dignified as possible.”

He added that Abraham Quintanilla Jr., the singer’s father, was exhausted and suffering under the pressure placed on him by thousands of phone calls from the media and fans.

“He’s not really rational any more because he lost his baby daughter,” Bruni said. “The family really needs its privacy to get their thoughts together for tomorrow.”

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