

Still fending off shots

Ex-goalie's border watch draws critics

By SHARON McNARY / The Riverside Press-Enterprise – September 16, 2005

Andy Ramirez had followed TV cameras outside the anti-illegal immigration conference he was attending at a Beverly Hills hotel last month. As he watched demonstrators wave signs and shout, "Racist scum, KKK!" they turned on him with slow, taunting calls: "ANN-dee! ANN-dee!"

Ramirez, 37, of Chino, got used to taking body checks and headshots in the years he played goalie on semi-pro hockey teams. He's out of hockey now, sidelined by a dozen years of living with multiple sclerosis, but he remains a target of verbal attacks in the often-hostile arena of immigration politics.

On this day, after speaking with reporters, Ramirez asked a demonstrator to explain how his wanting the U.S. to enforce its own immigration laws at the border made him a Nazi or Klansman.

"Can you imagine me walking into a KKK meeting?" Ramirez asked the man. "Why aren't you at the Mexican consulate protesting the abuses that take place at the hands of the human smugglers?"

Ramirez, whose grandfather was carried into the U.S. from Mexico as an infant in 1918, uses his Latino heritage to deflect accusations that he has racist motives for wanting better control of the U.S. border.

He rejects the idea that, as a Latino, he is not entitled as an American to publicly challenge the government's failure to control illegal immigration.

He purposely chose to start his border watch on Sept. 16, when Mexican citizens celebrate their Independence Day.

"Why are they celebrating independence when they live in a state of poverty?" Ramirez said in an interview. "They may celebrate their independence from a colonial power, but they're still enslaved by the ruling class and oligarchy that rules Mexico."

Ramirez grew up in the San Gabriel Valley, graduating from a public high school in Baldwin Park. By the time he reached voting age, he said, he was a Reagan Republican son of Democrat parents.

He became disillusioned with Republicans over economic issues and switched parties, gaining a seat on the state Democratic Central Committee at age 24. He ran twice for the 60th Assembly District in the West Covina area and lost both races. Angry with

Democrats who tried to get him to drop out of the second race, he re-registered as a Republican.

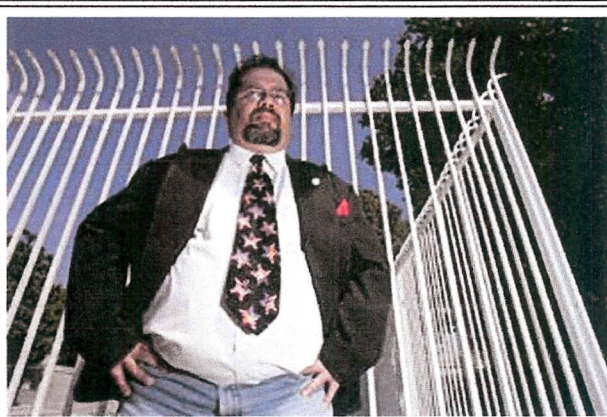
Ramirez has also done a 180-degree turnabout on the merits of Prop. 187, a 1994 initiative that would have denied public social, educational and health services to undocumented immigrants had it withstood court challenges.

At first he opposed it because it would interfere with health and education. But when he became a Republican, he became active in the campaigns to keep the law from being declared unconstitutional in the courts and to enact a replacement version.

He acknowledges that it would be nearly impossible for the government to implement his proposed solution to the problems posed by the nation's nearly 11 million illegal immigrants:

"You deport them," he said. "Until the law is changed, we enforce the law."

Andy's Note – The reporter was inaccurate about a key fact. My position on 187 did not change due to my switching parties. I did that after talking with the Prop 187 author and campaign chairman and saw what he was really trying to accomplish, which was not how the CA Democratic Party or media portrayed it. Btw, Ron Prince was the author.



Greg Vojtko / The Press-Enterprise

Andy Ramirez, chairman of Friends of the Border Patrol, insists that American borders be more strictly protected by the federal government.