

For Slain Singer's Father, Memories and Questions

By ROSS E. MILLOY

CORPUS CHRISTI, Tex., April 2 — Abraham Quintanilla still sees his daughter not as the 23-year-old Tejano music star who was gunned down on Friday but as a little girl, twirling to the sound of her own voice on the lawn behind their home in a modest neighborhood.

"My mind's been going a hundred miles an hour since this happened, and I just keep replaying the same thing over and over in my head," he said today, two days after her death. "That's the way I keep seeing her: singing and dancing as a little girl."

His daughter, Selena Quintanilla Perez, was killed after a business dispute with a disgruntled employee, he said. The woman accused of shooting her, Yolanda Saldivar, manager of a boutique owned by the Quintanilla family and founder of the Selena Fan Club, is being held in the Nueces County jail under a suicide watch, unable to post her \$100,000 bail.

Selena was the undisputed queen of Tejano music, a modern version of European and Mexican-influenced polkas spiced with twanging country guitars that is a passion among Hispanic communities in the Southwest. An informal network of Tejano radio stations links the rural agricultural flats of South Texas to the urban barrios of California, and as word of Selena's death spread this weekend across the region, fans began streaming toward this Gulf Coast city.

Throughout the day, tens of thousands of mourners, most Hispanic, filed past the young woman's closed coffin in the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center at the rate of 50 a minute. The bier was surrounded by hundreds of floral wreaths contributed by fans.

Dolores Quintanillo, the singer's aunt, said the family decided to open the casket late in the day. She said they were concerned about rumors among her fans that Selena was not inside the casket.

Lieut. A. Guerrero, head of the Corpus Christi Police Department's crowd and traffic control unit, estimated that the casket would be viewed by 30,000 to 40,000 people.

"People started lining up at 4 A.M.," Lieutenant Guerrero said, "and it's been a steady stream ever since. I've talked to people from San Francisco, Miami and Mexico City. They just keep coming."

Local Tejano stations continued to play Selena tributes virtually non-stop. One interspersed the lively, upbeat rhythms of her music with recorded eulogies given on Saturday night at a memorial service. A local television station presented live coverage of the scene at the convention center, mixed with interviews and performance videos from throughout Selena's career.

A scant half-mile from the Days Inn motel where she was shot, her 56-year-old father huddled today with other grieving family members at Q Productions, a onetime auto body shop that had been converted into a recording studio — and accepted condolences from a constant flow of visiting performers, promoters, disc jockeys and fans.

Hugging Johnny Canales, star of a popular Spanish-language television show broadcast in 23 countries, Mr. Quintanilla said quietly, "It's just a bad, bad dream."

Since Friday the family has been besieged by reporters and well-wishers: Julio Iglésias and the family of Gloria Estefan called; a popular Latino group, La Mafia, canceled a performance in Guatemala to return for the funeral on Monday. Madonna faxed her condolences.

"Selena was a good-hearted person and people could read this in her, from little kids to the middle-aged to senior citizens," Mr. Quintanilla said, explaining the outpouring of sympathy his family had received. "Everyone loved Selena."

As for his daughter's death, Mr. Quintanilla said: "I don't know why it happened. We live in a crazy world, a dangerous world. Selena was a trusting person. She didn't realize how popular she was. She didn't realize there were people out there who would harm her."

"That trust that she had for people is what took her life."

Little was known today about Ms. Saldivar, a 34-year-old registered nurse who held police officers and a negotiating team at bay after the shooting for nearly 10 hours before surrendering. Mr. Quintanilla said family members had suspected Ms. Saldivar of embezzling money from the Selena Fan Club and from Selena Etc., a San Antonio hair and clothing boutique she managed.

"I saw it coming," Mr. Quintanilla said. "Not to that extreme, of course, but I knew this woman was a bomb, a time bomb. I didn't see it until we started cornering her with evidence of embezzlement and she turned into

Blocked due to copyright.
See full page image or
microfilm.

With lines forming from 4 A.M., 30,000 to 40,000 mourners passed the coffin of the Tejano singer Selena yesterday in the Corpus Christi, Tex., convention center. Many mourners like these four young women were in tears over the killing of the popular 23-year-old singer at a motel here on Friday.

an animal."

Other than to say Ms. Saldivar became "withdrawn," Mr. Quintanilla would not disclose specifics about her recent behavior because he did not want information to leak out that might assist in her defense. He said that Selena and other fam-

ily members met with Ms. Saldivar several weeks ago to request banking records and that Selena and her husband, Chris Perez, picked up the records on Thursday night. On Friday morning, he said, Selena called Ms. Saldivar to request a missing bank statement. He said Ms. Saldi-

var told his daughter it was waiting for her at the motel. Selena went alone to retrieve the document, he said.

"She lured her there," Mr. Quintanilla said. "I warned them she was dangerous, but they didn't listen. My little girl."