



Edgar Romero/CNS

Former Salvadoran National Guard Director Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova in an undated file photo.

Generals cleared in murder case

By Tom Tracy
Catholic News Service

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Relatives of the four U.S. missionaries slain 20 years ago in El Salvador said Nov. 3 they were shocked but not discouraged after a federal jury cleared two former Salvadoran generals of liability in the 1980 rape and murders of the women.

"While we didn't win, we didn't lose," said Bill Ford, a New York trial attorney and the older brother of Sister Ita Ford, one of the Maryknoll missionaries killed by Salvadoran security forces during the decade-long civil war in that Central American nation.

Bill Ford had taken a lead role among

the churchwomen's family members in working with the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights to bring the retired Salvadoran military officers to court under the 1992 U.S. Torture Victim Protection Act.

In the four-week trial of Ford vs. Garcia, the families had asked for a total of \$100 million in damages from the men, both of whom are living in Florida.

After the verdict, Ford said that the families of the women were simply grateful for the chance to tell their story in a federal courtroom. Only two years ago, they had learned that the Salvadorans — Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, and former Defense Minister Jose Guillermo Garcia — had been living in Florida since 1989, making the law-

suit possible.

"We know more people know about this (atrocities) and more people in Salvador who were brutalized by these guys will come forward," Ford said. "We are not done with these guys."

The verdict came a month before the 20th anniversary of the deaths of Maryknoll Sisters Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, a Maryknoll lay missionary.

In 1984, five Salvadoran National Guard members were convicted of the killings and sentenced to 30 years in prison. But four years later, four of the convicted guardsmen said they had been acting on orders from their superiors.

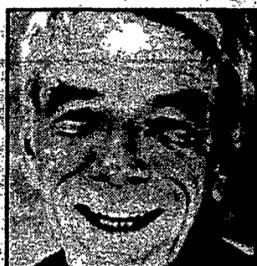
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Catholic Courier

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 112 NO.6 ■ THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2000 ■ 75¢ ■ 16 PAGES

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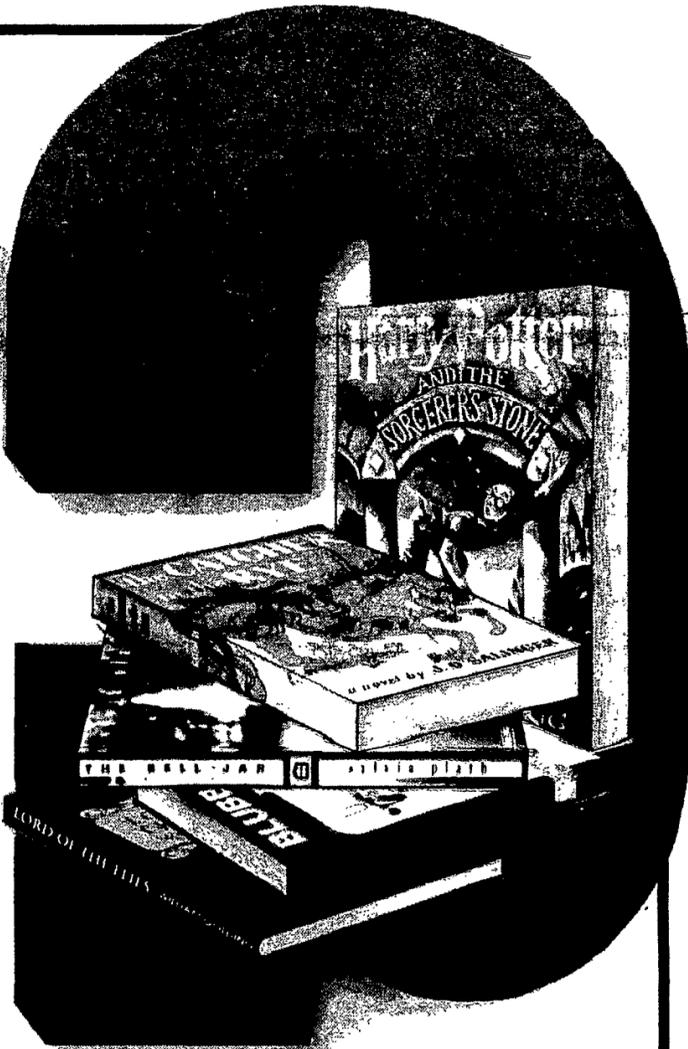
*The only good thing I knew she wouldn't let old Phoebe come to my g**d** funeral because she was only a little kid. That was the only good part. Then I thought about the whole bunch of them sticking me in a g**d** cemetery and all, with my name on this tombstone and all. Surrounded by dead guys. Boy, when you're dead, they really fix you up. I hope to hell when I do die somebody has sense enough to just dump me in the river or something. Anything except sticking me in a g**d** cemetery.*

— *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger

Even though parents, especially, may object to the profanity-laced narrative in *The Catcher in the Rye*, the fact remains that this is a widely used book in high-school English literature classes — including those of Catholic high schools in the Rochester Diocese.

According to the American Library Association, *The Catcher in the Rye* consistently places on its "Most Challenged" book lists. Others include *Blubber* by Judy Blume, for offensive language and other material allegedly unsuited to its intended age group; *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou, for its description of rape; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, for racial references; and *Heather Has Two Mommies*, by Leslea Newman, for its depiction of homosexuality.

As many as 2,000 formal challenges take place across the country each year, the ALA said. A challenge, according to the national organization, is "a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school about a book's content or appropriateness."



STORY BY
MIKE LATONA

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