

Hispanic leader dies after fall at Hotel Dieu

By Robert Palomares
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Modesto Gomez, an institution in the El Paso Hispanic community for decades, fell to his death today from a fourth-story window at Hotel Dieu, a hospital spokesman said.



Modesto Gomez

Hospital officials said Gomez's body landed on the parapet over the hospital's entrance.

A hospital spokesman said Gomez, 88, was a patient in the hospital, and was registered to a room on the fourth floor.

The body, dressed in a hospital gown, was discovered on the roof of the parapet. A slipper was found several yards away, in a hospital driveway.

Police would not comment on the death other than to say it is under investigation.

A hospital spokesman said there is no evidence that Gomez jumped. Earlier in the morning, hospital officials said a witness saw Gomez jump from a window in the hospital, but that later proved to be untrue.

Gomez, a native El Pasoan, had been active in several community organizations. He had received awards and honors from the city and individual organizations for his work among the elderly and poor in South El Paso.

The most recent of these honors was the establishment of the Modesto and Maria de Jesus Gomez Endowment Fund, Inc.

The fund was established in 1982 to help needy children through educational opportunities, said Candelario Mena, president of the fund.

Gomez, a former grocer in El Paso, provided food for lunches at Aoy Elementary School long before the government's hot lunch program was started, said Mena.

Gomez was a charter member of the LULAC Council



Herald Post photo by Jerry Littman

Arrow shows fourth floor room windows from where Modesto Gomez fell.

132, and has held every national LULAC office, including president.

Several years ago, Gomez began the Tata Club at Bowie High School, which helped find jobs for students who were not going on to college. For those wanting to continue their education, Gomez helped provide jobs to pay for their schooling.

In 1975, the city dedicated a park on the city's South side to honor Gomez.

"I'm really interested in helping needy people — I always have been. I like it just like I like eating breakfast," Gomez said during an interview in 1982.