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Street in barrio renamed for hero

By Ramon Renteria

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Old friends hugged the Rev. Harold Rahm and said the new street sign bearing his name is a fitting tribute for a priest regarded as an El Paso folk hero.

"It's the most powerful event in my life, deeply emotional — something beyond imagination," Rahm said.

Rahm returned to South El Paso's Segundo Barrio and found his name on the street where he worked and played with kids as a young Jesuit priest in the 1950s.

El Paso City Council made it all official Tuesday, renaming the 14-block Fifth Avenue in honor of the charismatic, bicycle-riding padre with the boyish grin.

Friends and political leaders celebrated with a brief ceremony at the corner of Father Rahm Avenue and South Oregon.

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thousands of people who claim South El Paso roots.

"He kept a whole generation of kids out of trouble, made everybody feel like family — like they belonged," said Eddie Salcido, an El Paso broker.

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Rahm is credited with helping pacify barrio gangs in the 1950s and helping steer troubled youth away from the bad

influences of life.

"It's a fitting honor," said Manny Duran, who counts himself among the scores of young people that Rahm influenced. "He used to take care of me all the time."

Many of the young people Rahm inspired are now successful, influential El Pasoans.

Rahm founded Our Lady's Youth Center in the 1950s, at one time serving the spiritual and recreational needs of more than 100,000 South El Paso teens.

"He did a lot for people, regardless of ethnicity or problems," said Joe Aguilar, director of Project Bravo.

At 73, Rahm still helps the underprivileged of Brazil, where he has helped transform the lives of troubled youth, unwed mothers, prostitutes, drug addicts and alcoholics.

"The simple things that I've learned working with our beloved people in this barrio have become very powerful and helpful for me," Rahm said.