

As the proceedings moved on to another refugee/witness, Joel Morelos, the defense team battled with Judge Carroll over the propriety of a line of questioning prosecutor that prosecutor Reno said wanted to pursue with Morelos. Stephen Cooper, attorney for Jim Corbett, objected to prosecutor Reno asking questions about a conversation Morelos had with government informant in which a passing reference was made to Corbett.

Cooper argued that the conversation had nothing to do with any alleged illegal activities by Corbett, and that to admit it as evidence would only prejudice and confuse the jury. Cooper went on to point out that Corbett was in no way connected with crossing Morelo, and that to bring up his name during questioning of Morelos would be improper. Cooper charged that the government has no information to indicate that Morelos would give incriminating evidence against Corbett, and noted that Corbett is not charged with anything related to Morelos.

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Carroll said that he would at least allow limited questioning along those lines, but did not deliver a firm ruling on the matter.

During testimony, Morelos said that he and his wife had tried on two occasions to enter the United States and had been caught the first time. By telling the border patrol that he was a Mexican national, Morelos was able to avoid deportation to his home country of Guatemala and instead was simply sent back to Mexico. Once there he made a second attempt -- this one successful -- at entering the United States.

Morelos, who simply found a hole in the fence and crawled through, said that the Sanctuary workers did not help him cross the border, but did offer him food and shelter. He added that the defendants prayed with him, and told him of churches that would also be willing to open their doors to him.

Friday

Defense attorneys, government prosecutor Donald M. Reno, and Judge Earl Carroll wrapped up the 14th week of Sanctaury trial proceedings with a burst of legal skirmishing. Among other things, the admissibility of hearsay evidence and a "mock trial" held by the defense team provided new fuel for the protracted church/state struggle.

The hearsay issue arose during more testimony by Joel Morelos, a Guatemalan refugee now in Sanctuary in Philadelphia, PA. Prosecutor Reno asked Morelos about a conversation between defendant Phil Willis Conger and government informant Jesus Cruz held at Southside church. Cueing on the fact that Morelos was also at the church at the time, Reno attempted to elicit testimony from Morelos about that conversation. However, because Morelos did not participate in the conversation, his hearsay account of the conversation would not be admissible as evidence.