

COURTS

# Hinojosa pleads guilty

## Theft, fraud doom ex-employee, 39

By DENISE BLAZ  
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A man accused of defrauding a company owned by local businesswoman Raquel Gonzalez to the tune of approximately half a million dollars entered a guilty plea Thursday.

In May 2009, Edward Lee Hinojosa, 39, was indicted on 13 counts of varying degrees of theft, three counts of fraud and one count of misapplication of fiduciary property.

A recommendation of 12 years to serve was presented before the judge during the walk-in hearing.

As comptroller for Webb County Title and Abstract Co., Hinojosa was in charge of withholding 10 percent of the proceeds from a sale when a foreigner bought or sold property in the U.S.

Hinojosa would withhold the checks made out to the IRS and after some time passed would void them out and issue the checks payable to himself.

During interviews, Hinojosa admitted to doing this seven to eight times.

"On the books, it appeared that the checks had been sent," said Assistant District Attorney, Roderick "Rick" Lopez.



GONZALEZ



HINOJOSA

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An investigation conducted by the FBI and the Texas Department of Insurance found Hinojosa committed the offenses over several years. According to the indictment, the first occurrence was in August 2005 and the practice continued until April 2007.

The substantial monetary loss of the company led to the collapse of the company, which Gonzalez has spent 40 years building up.

"This damaged 27 families, and this damaged Ms. Gonzalez, who has lost her car, business and is struggling to keep her house," said Gracie Velasquez, 50. Velasquez is now the sole employee of the company.

The Texas State Board of Public Accountancy revoked Hinojosa's license to practice on July 31, 2009.

In 2005, Hinojosa was

suspended after a complaint alleging a violation regarding mandatory continuing professional education. Another complaint regarding discreditable acts led to his revocation.

"It was important to me because Raquel is an elderly woman that should be enjoying the fruits of her labor. But because of Edward Hinojosa, this has all drastically changed. There's so much collateral damage and all the litigation that has come out of this. She'll never see a dime of that money, but to some degree some form of justice has been done," Lopez said.

Hinojosa is currently in the custody at the Webb County Jail. Sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 21.

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