

JIMMY SMITS: 'I am a firm believer in education and have worked very hard to tell young Latinos that they must go to college and that, if possible, they should pursue an advanced degree. I am convinced that education is the great equalizer.'

— www.brainyquote.com



En breve

WHAT: Air Force pilot-turned-comedian Jose Sarduy shares the stage with Cleto Rodriguez and Walter Campbell

WHEN: 8:30 p.m. Oct. 19, 22; 8:30 p.m., 10:45 p.m. and midnight Oct. 20-21

WHERE: Rivercenter Comedy Club, 849 E. Commerce St.

HOW MUCH: \$10-\$13. Call (210) 229-1420 to confirm show times

Jose Sarduy, an Air Force pilot who moonlights as a comedian, took third place in the Rivercenter Comedy Club's 'Search for the Funniest Person in South Texas' contest.

ROBERT MCLEROY/
SPECIAL TO CONEXION

HIS COMEDY IS TAKING OFF

Pilot makes the most of his time on the ground

RUDY ARISPE, Conexión

It's not funny that the father of Cuban-born comedian Jose Sarduy spent seven years in jail as a political prisoner for writing an anti-communist letter and then posting it on a bulletin board at a school in Cuba.

Sarduy spices up the story by saying his dad's actions took place at Karl Marx niversity, a fictional school. It's those family experiences that Sarduy sat-

ires during his stand-up comedy routines.

"It's like 'C'mon, dad, you're going to the school of the guy who created communism, so you probably should have seen that they were going to arrest you,'" Sarduy, a 29-year-old Air Force pilot and flight instructor by day who hams it up doing comedy at night, said while sipping a hot chocolate on a rather warm afternoon at Starbucks.

Sarduy, who took third place in the Rivercenter Comedy Club's "Search for the Funniest Person in South Texas" a few months back, will drive from Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio to San Antonio for another round of laughs from Oct. 18-

22.

Who knows what life might be like today for Sarduy had his father not been jailed for his remarks? Perhaps it was a blessing because when Fidel Castro emptied much of the country's prisons in 1980, the Sarduy family emigrated to Florida in Mariel boatlifts.

After graduating from the Air Force Academy in Colorado, Sarduy flew C-141s, transporting people and supplies across the nation. While stationed in New Jersey, the aviator jumped at the opportunity to try comedy, a secret talent he'd been priming for years.

"I'd take the train to New York to do standup and was do-

ing about 15 shows a week," he said.

The pilot had other chances to hone his comedic timing and delivery. The antiquated C-141 cargo plane often broke down. So if he found himself grounded in Seattle, Indianapolis or Philadelphia, Sarduy usually could be found at a nearby comedy club.

He said, "I'd walk in and say, 'Can I do a guest set?' Some (owners) were like, 'No, we don't know you.' Others were like, 'Sure.'"

Sarduy is prepared to see how far he can get in the entertainment industry. He's considering leaving active-duty military service next summer and

remaining in the Air Force Reserves to focus on comedy full time.

"I've been told I have talent, and I've never not gotten a laugh," he said. "I've had bad shows where one joke worked, and the rest of the night you can hear the crickets. But you shake it off."

He learned to be funny as an adolescent, he said, mainly because he was funny-looking.

"Once I hit puberty, I was not an attractive kid. I had big ears, and the only way I could talk to girls was to be funny," he said. "And then I started playing sports and filled out. Then it was a nice little bonus."

rarispe@conexionsa.com