

# Longest school bus ride in nation ends

EL PASO (AP)—Claudia Garcia can't say goodbye to the marathon school trek that devoured her days these past two years until she reaches the high school in the remote town of Terlingua will allow her to escape the nation's longest school bus ride, a 160-mile round trip through the Big Bend region's desolate deserts.

Now she can look forward to a five-minute commute, a school day that ends well before dusk and certainly more rest.

"All the traveling wore us out, getting up and having to spend so much time on the bus, then getting home late," said Claudia, 16, who will be an 11th-grader this year. "They some of us have jobs or we have chores. It was kind of hard to manage all of that in one day. Time would go fast."

The trip began as early as 5:30 a.m. and finally say goodbye to the marathon school trek that devoured her days these past two years until she reaches the high school in the remote town of Terlingua will allow her to escape the nation's longest school bus ride, a 160-mile round trip through the Big Bend region's desolate deserts.

But since the 1960s, there has been a necessary evil for those who wanted a diploma. Existing area schools only go up to the eighth grade and the nearest high school is in Alpine, 80 miles north. A determined community changed all that. The Big Bend Education Corp.'s efforts pulled together more than \$100,000, said the Rev. Judy Burgess, the Episcopal priest who heads the corporation.

About \$80,000 was in cash and the rest in donations of time or building materials, including the cement used to pour the school's foundation.

"It's amazing how they worked so

hard," said Yvonne Rodriguez, Claudia's mother. "We're going to have a school for the children this year."

The organization still needs about \$225,000 to complete the main building, so the initial classes will be held in portable structures. Still more money is being sought for a library.

Operational funding will come primarily from the state. The \$1,000 tuition local school districts had been paying the Alpine district for each student attending Alpine High will also be used for the Terlingua school.

"It's pretty exciting and scary all in one," said Kathy Killingsworth, superintendent of the Terlingua Common School District.

The district will operate the school in cooperation with the San Vicente Independent School District, based at Big Bend National Park.