

The Days of Old

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THE DAYS OF OLD

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. Deuteronomy 32:7

And so I asked the elders and they did remember the days of old. They shared many things with me, stories, *adivinanzas* (riddles), songs, and old *dichos* (sayings). Some related of their own experiences; others passed on accounts of the experiences of others they heard from their elders.

I found that elderly folks enjoy talking about the old days and old ways. I grew up in northeastern New Mexico with many of the old ways, customs, and traditions. A great deal of respect and reverence was conferred upon the elderly. For example, you will find I use the word *Don* or *Doña* before an older person's name. "Don" is a gentlemen's title and used only before Christian names with or without a surname. Among Nuevo Mejicanos, "Don" was used as a title of respect for an older gentleman and "Doña" for an older lady.

I spent many hours searching through old documents, church records, and old newspapers. I traveled to small towns and villages and spoke with many elderly people. I was kindly received in every humble home I visited. Sometimes I had a reel-to-reel tape recorder but mostly I would take notes and dates. For many years I have kept a collection of stories and research materials about the days of old. It is out of a desire to share some of these stories that this humble attempt is made at writing a book.

TREMENTINA

There is a lonely little cemetery off to the side of where New Mexico State Road 65 crosses Trementina Creek. In this little plot of New Mexican soil with its crumbling rock walls, lie buried the mortal remains of an old buffalo hunter, José Antonio Vialpando, his wife, Maria Yrinea Blea de Vialpando, and other *pobladores* (settlers) of the Trementina Country.

Almost forgotten, these were the true pioneers whose names you'll not find in the state's history books. As in many other old campo santos scattered throughout our state, there are also many stories buried here too, stories of tragedies suffered and hardships endured. Born and raised on the frontier, what these pioneers lacked in comforts and securities they made up in courage and faith.

Unfortunately, as is the case today, few people then left written accounts of their travels and experiences. However, some of their stories and experiences have been passed down from generation to generation orally. Consequently, sometimes facts and legends are often entwined.

Some of these stories were shared with me by some elderly folks, former residents of the Trementina country, who in their youth, heard them many times and who knew the people they heard them from. Everything told me was related in Spanish and necessitates translating into English, a most difficult undertaking for me because I am not a professional writer. Much true meaning can also be lost in the translation therefore some words and phrases will be written as they were told.

Trementina, a strange and almost magical name, is the name used by the people of northern New Mexico for the gum or resin

exuding from *piñon* trees. Long before Hispanic families settled in the Trementina country, Apache Indians, who the Spaniards called Faraones, roamed there freely. In the Trementina country there are many petroglyphs along the banks of *arroyos* and *volaros* (precipices). Some of these drawings were probably the work of these Indians.

The Faraones had various bands called the Lemias, the Chupainas, and the Nementinas or Trementinas. They inhabited the plains east of Pecos Pueblo and ranged north to the headwaters of the river the Indians called the *Rio Colorado* (Red River) presently known as the Canadian River. Old time Hispanos also called this river *El Rio Colorado*. The Spaniards first saw it in 1719 during a campaign against the Utes and Comanches. "His lordship" Governor Antonio Valverde y Cosío named it *El Rio De Nuestra Señora De La Soledad* (The River Of Our Lady Of Solitude).*

During the second quarter of the 19th Century, Hispanos began bringing their sheep to graze in the Trementina area despite occasional depredations and murders committed by hostile Indians. The Trementina area was mostly settled by people from Los Valles De San Agustín whose flocks and herds had outgrown the available pastures in that beautiful valley along the Gallinas River.

The little hamlet of Trementina was first temporarily settled for this reason by my great-grandfather, Santiago Blea and his extended family in the late 1870s. But by the mid 1890s, they returned to Trementina to make it their permanent home. However, this time they also came to settle there for religious reasons.

* After Coronado. P. 116. Translated and Edited by B. Thomas, Univ. of Okla. Press, Norman, 1935.

Part of the story of Trementina is also that of Santiago De Jesús Blea y Maes, "Mi Padre Blea", as he was affectionally called in his latter years. He was my mother's maternal grandfather. Santiago was born July 18, 1830 in the little village of El Cerrito below San Miguel Del Vado. He was one of many children born to José Rafael Blea and María De La Luz Maes who were married in the church of Nuestra Señora De Los Angeles De Pecos in San Miguel

on December 14, 1814.

The Bleas were among the first Spanish and Genízaro families to settle the eastern frontier of New Mexico settling first along the Pecos River at San Miguel, El Cerito, La Cuesta (now

Villanueva), and Anton Chico. Genizaros were Hispanized Indians. In 1845, Don Juan De Dios Maes distributed lands east of these settlements across a ridge that runs north and south for a distance of about fifty miles called Las Chupainas. Las Chupainas was named for the band of Apaches who had once roamed that area.

The Bleas joined their close relatives and other *vecinos* and settled along the Gallinas River in a beautiful valley long known as Los Valles De San Agustín below present Las Vegas. The Bleas along with the Gonzales, Nietos, Madrids, Valverdes, Estradas, Jaramillos, and other families, farmed the fertile lands along the river and pastured their cattle, sheep, and goats in the surrounding hills.

One of their first joint projects was the construction of a church building that is still standing today. They named it for their patron saint, San Agustín. The church building with its thick high walls served not only as a place of worship but also as protection from hostile Indians.

But not all Indians who came to San Agustín, Los Fuertes, La Liendre, Chaperito, and other settlements along the Gallinas River were hostiles. Several bands of Comanches were regular visitors who came to trade and visit their Hispanic friends and in many cases, relatives. Marriages between Comanches and Hispanos were not uncommon. For example, Manuel Narvaiz, the Comanche Indian who served as guide for Josiah Gregg, the well known trader and author of *The Commerce Of The Prairies*, was married to Ygnacia Armijo of San Miguel. Narvaiz was known as Manuel El Cumanche.

Plains Indians and other unconverted Indians were called *Gentiles* by the Spaniards. They were often welcomed into the Spanish and Genízaro families who had settled the eastern frontier as it meant for better relations with them. However, they first had to be baptized into the Church at which time they either chose or were given a Christian name.

Others, like El Puertas, a Comanche chief, often took Hispanic or Genízaro wives without benefit of a Church ceremony. One of Puertas' wives was from Chaperito. More on El Puertas later.

My mother related stories about these visits by the Indians that were told by her grandparents. The Comanches often brought their wives and children when they visited the eastern settlements. They would camp just outside the villages and sometimes even near a house but most would never enter in. Sometimes the Indians would peek through an open window and stare at the occupants, laugh, and in the Spanish language would tease, "Mejicano, pecho peludo, ojos pelados". (Mexican, with the hairy chest and peeled eyes) To the Indians, someone with light-colored eyes was thought to have had the eye color peeled off.

Santiago and others also made trips to the Comanche country. In late Fall, the men from the settlements would put together a combination hunting and trading party to the Llano Estacado or Staked Plains. They would often join other parties from Chaperito, San Miguel, La Cuesta, and other settlements. Many came from Santa Fe and beyond.

They traveled *La Vereda De Los Cumancheros* (The Comanchero Trail) eastward past *El Ojo De La Cabra* (Sheep Springs) and *Cerro De Tecunucar* (Tucumcari Mountain). They would climb the ceja or brow of the Staked Plains at *El Cañon Del Apache* southeast of present Tucumcari. This was one of the few places where carretas and wagons could climb the ceja. It was then known as *El Puerto De Los Rio Abajeños*. *Los Rio Abajeños* was the name applied to the people who lived along the lower Rio Grande valley, Bernalillo, Albuquerque, Belen, etc. More about these hunting trips later.

Young Santiago did well for himself. In 1852, he married fifteen year-old María Juana Teresa De Los Dolores Madrid. He and "Mi Madre Lila" as she was later called by her grandchildren, had sixteen children. In his latter years Santiago became patriarch of a large extended family.

He built their house of rocks, so abundant in that area. As his sons and daughters married, they added on to the structure and soon their place resembled a fort of sorts for the place came to be

known as Los Fuertes. The ruins of their residence still stand today along the meandering Gallinas River approximately one mile above the village of San Agustín.

Santiago also prospered in sheep and cattle. During the 1860s and 1870s, he made several trips along the Santa Fe Trail to "the States" to exchange wool and hides for *American* goods. These round trips to Missouri took months and were always full of risks and dangers. The greatest dangers were from Indian attacks in what is now southeastern Colorado and Kansas where the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Kiowas preyed upon wagon trains.

During those same years, Santiago and many other stock raisers were running cattle and especially sheep in the Trementina country despite the dangers from hostile Indians there. The census enumerators during that period noted several names of shepherds killed by Indians in that region.

However, by the late 1870s most of the Plains tribes had been placed in reservations. It was during this period that Santiago, his sons, and sons-in-law erected a line of rock houses and corrals on the *voladeros* (precipices) above Trementina Creek. According to my mother, my uncle Macedon Valverde, and others, Trementina was originally established as a sheep camp by "Mi Padre Blea" whose flocks had out-grown the available pastures in Los Valles. The Bleas spent the Summer months with their flocks in Trementina. They also planted corn, beans, *chile*, and other vegetables in the ancones along the creek.

In the census of June 1, 1880, the census enumerator noted "fifty-five inhabitants in the Hamlet of Trementina". Santiago Blea was listed as a cattle and sheep raiser. Other families shown were those of Prudencio Griego, Matias Rodrigues, Pantaleon Anaya, Marcelino Encinias, Juan B. Ortiz, José Antonio Vialpando, Juan Bautista Martin, and Jesús Muniz.

However, these quarters were only for seasonal use and the Bleas continued to permanently reside in Los Fuertes in Los Valles De San Agustín

Then something happened that would make a tremendous impact upon Santiago Blea's life. "The Sword Of The Spirit, which is the Word of God", The Holy Bible, was introduced into

Los Valles and into Santiago Blea's life. It began when a Presbyterian missionary named John Annin came to Las Vegas in the Fall of 1869. With the help of one of New Mexico's first protestants, Don José Ynes Perea, a mission was established in Las Vegas. Don José Ynes was from the very prominent Perea family of Bernalillo. He had been educated in Mexico from where he had afterwards traveled via Vera Cruz to the Eastern United States where he had later been converted.

Other few but faithful Hispanos were converted and despite strong opposition from the Roman Catholic establishment, they spread the Gospel throughout San Miguel County. One of these was a young man named Gabino Rendón. He was later to become an ordained Minister of the Gospel. (Hernano Rendón, as he was later known, married my parents in 1919 when my father returned from service in France.)

In his book, *Hand On My Shoulder*, Hermano Rendón relates that one day he rode into Los Valles to distribute Bible tracts. Some of the tracts fell into the hands of the village blacksmith, Albino Madrid.

Madrid had previously acquired a rare Spanish Bible and had begun reading and sharing its message with those who would listen. Albino and his younger brother, Pablo, began riding into Las Vegas to attend services in the Spanish Presbyterian Church. By then the pastor was Dr. James Fraser. Dr. Fraser had resigned as pastor of the Anglo church to work with the Spanish-speaking people. He also spoke Spanish and was aided in the evangelical work by a native New Mexican evangelist name John Whitlock. According to church records, on November 1, 1884, John Whitlock was "duly appointed by the Presbytery to the office of Evangelist." He commenced his labors as an evangelist in the Spanish Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas.

John Whitlock was the son of Dr. John Marmaduke Whitlock, one of the earliest Americans in New Mexico. Dr. Whitlock settled in Las Vegas and married Josefta Lucero. Dr. Whitlock later served as Surgeon in Kit Carson's Regiment during the Civil War period. He was killed November 5, 1862 at Ft. Stanton not by Indians but by soldiers loyal to a Captain "Paddy" Graydon who

Dr. Whitlock killed in a duel over some Apache Indians Graydon had allegedly murdered in cold blood.

The younger Whitlock was a great Spirit-filled evangelist. He was not only respected and well liked, but being half Spanish, was kin to many people. According to my uncle Macedon Valverde, "El Hermano Whitlock le decia a mi abuelita 'Tia.'" (Brother Whitlock used to call my grandmother, "Aunt").

John Whitlock and another Elder named Juan L. Torres were a great help to Reverend Fraser. They distributed evangelical literature and preached all around San Miguel County.

On December 21, 1888, Albino, Pablo, and Pablo's son, Manuel, became members of the Presbyterian Church at Las Vegas. With the conversion of the Madrids, services began to be held in Los Valles. On Thursday evening February 28, 1889, public worship services were held in Los Valles. The records of that meeting show that Juan L. Torres and John Whitlock, Elders, and Reverend James Fraser were present and that Reverend Fraser preached in Spanish.

It is not recorded from what text of Scripture Reverend Fraser preached, but his message brought a great response. When the call was made for those who wished to publicly accept the Gospel and Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, fifteen of those present, presented themselves. After being examined as to their knowledge of the Gospel and of their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, ten of those were baptized. They were: Santiago Blea, Faustin Garcia, Antonio Madril, Benito Lucero, Romulo Blea, Esquipula Jaramillo, Noberto Jaramillo, Martin Blea, and Maria Encarnación de Valverde. All were admitted to The Lord's Supper. The session was closed in prayer.

The following evening, March 1, 1889, the trio of evangelist took God's message of salvation down the Gallinas River to Chaperito where once again Reverend Fraser preached in Spanish. Twenty persons made decisions to accept Christ as their personal Savior there. Records of the Presbyterian Church show that numerous evangelical services were held in the valley of the Gallinas in Los Valles, Chaperito, El Aguilar, and even as far as Las Conchas.

The new converts lost very little time in erecting a place in which to worship. They built a new church building near some tall cottonwood trees near the Blea home. (The walls are still standing today.) This church building was different from the one Santiago and some of the others had help build a few years before a mile or so down the stream. It had a gable roof and something very new for that time, a wooden floor.

The worship services were also different from those of the Roman Catholic Church. There was singing of hymns and a preaching service but no Mass. There were no graven images of the saints and no figure of Jesus nailed to the cross. The new converts had learned from the preaching and from the Bible itself that the Lord forbade making and worshipping images. (Exodus 20:4,5.)

Santiago also discovered for himself (for he eventually learned to read), that what the Reverend "Juan" Whitlock and others had preached concerning the crucified Christ was also true. Jesus Christ was no longer dead and still nailed to the cross. He had risen and was alive forever, seated at the right hand of God The Father. (Romans 8: 34). How shocking it must have been to learn these truths. This "new" doctrine had completely shaken the old beliefs and traditional foundations.

But the cost of their new faith was high and this group of believers, as others before them, paid the price. Some families were split because of the new faith. Hatred was also encountered from some who had once been friends and even *compadres*. They were now *Protestantes*, "a word of reproach, a word men spat out" as the Reverend Gabino Rendón wrote in his book, *Hand On My Shoulder*.

Not only did the catholic priests set the Spanish people against the protestants, some catholic laymen would sometimes verbally and even physically abuse them. José Emiterio Cruz, who was later to become the pastor of La Paz Presbyterian Church in Trementina, was clubbed in the face by a Las Vegas policeman and dragged off to jail with a broken nose because he did not take off his hat during the Corpus Crisui procession. He was prosecuted and found guilty by the local Justice Of The Peace "for his act of

affrontry". However, he was later acquitted in District Court according to an article in *La Voz Del Pueblo*, November 16, 1895.

What God said about Abraham could also have been said about Santiago De Jesus Blea: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord..." (Genesis 18: 19). The word soon spread that Santiago Blea and his family, his sons-in-law included, were now *Protestantes* like Albino, Pablo, and Manuel Madrid. It must have been a shock and a great disappointment to many friends and relatives too. After all, the Catholic priest had often made the Blea home his rest stop on his visits to Los Valles De San Agustín. But perhaps the friendship between the priest and the Bleas was more dear than some thought. Some years later, Santiago's daughter, María Encarnacion Blea de Valverde, related the following incident to my mother:

"One day, after we had become Protestants, as we were traveling to Las Vegas, we met the priest on the road. The priest and my father exchanged greetings and to my surprise, he seemed very happy and friendly. He spoke very cordially to my parents. After a while he turned to me. I supposed he had noticed that all this time I had remained silent with my head bowed low.

"¿Que pasa, Chonita?", he said. '¿Que ya no me quietes hablar?'"

"What is the matter, Chonita? Don't you wish to speak to me anymore?"

"I mustered enough courage to answer him, 'It's just that I never thought you would ever want to speak to us again since we are now Protestants'."

"The priest smiled and said, 'A lo contrario, me alegro que se les han abierto su ojos.'"

"On the contrary, I am glad that your eyes have been opened."

The different faith now professed also brought division to Los Valles. Relationships, especially between the Blea family and some friends and relatives began to disintegrate. Hatred was beginning to be felt. Many people were not happy about them leaving the Catholic Church, especially those who were *Penitentes*.

The *Penitentes* practiced flagellation and other painful acts of contrition in imitation of Christ's suffering on His way to Calvary, hoping to achieve atonement by imitation of His tragedy.

The Reverend Gabino Rendón said of the *Penitentes*: "Many of them would never understand God's mercy and loving kindness. They had no joy in a living Lord." (*Hand On My Shoulder*, P-66.)

The words spoken by Abram to Lot long ago may have come to Santiago's mind: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee" (Genesis 13: 8). Sometime about 1894 or 1895, he left Los Valles and permanently settled in Trementina. There was plenty of good grazing land for his cattle and sheep and along the creek there were rich *ancones*, raised level tracts of land for raising crops.

My uncle Macedon Valverde who was born September 16, 1890 in Los Fuertes, vaguely remembered the move.

"The houses my grandfather had built there many years before were still standing. It was only a matter of cleaning them and making them liveable again. Sheep had used them for shelter. I remember having help clean out the sheep manure."

By 1900, Trementina and the surrounding area boasted a population of 653. The Register of Territorial Post Offices showed that on April 12, 1901, Trementina had a post office. The Postmaster was Martin Gurule. Cecilio Valverde succeeded Gurule as Postmaster on September 21, 1901.

Meanwhile, Santiago, his family, and others living in the area, began construction of a church building for which he donated the property. It was the third church building Santiago Blea would help erect. It too was built of stone so abundant in the surrounding area.

They named the church La Paz (Peace) Presbyterian Church. Reverend G.W. Curtis was the first pastor. Even before the church was built, he would ride and sometimes walk all the way from Las Vegas to conduct services at Trementina. Evangelist John Whitlock, Juan L. Torres, and others would also visit the Trementina congregation.

The dedication ceremonies were conducted on Sunday Febru-

ary 9, 1902. Church records show that three of Santiago Blea's sons-in-law were installed as Elders. They were Abram Salazar, Cecilio Valverde, and Noberto Jaramillo. Some of the families officially joined the Trementina church "by letter" that day, having transferred their membership from the church at Los Fuertes.

Reverend Curtis died shortly thereafter in June of 1902.

Hermano (Brother) Emitterio Cruz came to be the first Hispanic minister to live and pastor the Trementina church. His wife's name was Margarita L. Cruz. The couple had six children. According to my mother, the second Hispanic pastor was the Reverend Eliseo Cordova. His wife was Percide M. Cordova. They also had six children, Lydia, Andres, Beatriz, Precilla, Ramon, and Daniel. Hermano Cordova pastored the church from 1907 until 1923 when he was transferred to Raton.

Since establishing itself in New Mexico, the Presbyterian Church had also paid much attention to education in the state. By mid-July, 1894, the Church had twenty-eight schools in which were employed forty-six teachers with a pupil attendance of 1594 according to an article in the *Las Vegas Weekly Optic* dated July 19, 1894. The Board of Presbyterian Missions saw a need for a work to be established at Trementina. Without a doubt, they sent their very best to the task. She was Miss Alice Alta Blake, later called "The Angel of Trementina". Miss Blake came to Trementina from El Aguilar near Chaperito where she had begun her missionary work in 1892. She joined the Trementina church on September 7, 1902 and almost immediately began the establishment of a mission school there.

Miss Blake was born June 24, 1867 at Lake Okoboji, Iowa. She came to Colorado with her family in 1881 settling near Trinidad. Later she moved to New Mexico and became a missionary. She held a medical degree and in her mission work served as doctor, nurse, and teacher. The first two accomplishments became very expedient with the outbreak of an epidemic of diphtheria in the Trementina community. By use of anti-toxin and Miss Blake's tireless nursing care, all were brought back to complete recovery which was a real triumph for that early day. *

*(*Tucumcari Daily News*, November 21, 1950).

Many people both protestant and catholic, had nothing but praise for Miss Blake. She was highly respected by everyone. Christmas plays portraying the birth of Christ were presented under her supervision every year in the church at Trementina. The church would be crowded to capacity. People came from miles around for these and other special events and activities. Dances were also held at the Community House. Miss Blake did not favor the dances being held but she respected the wishes of those who did.

Miss Blake also served as Postmistress from 1902 until 1911 when Abelino Estrada took over the position for three years. The Estrada family like others in the Trementina area had also lived in Los Valles. Later, the 1870 census showed Abelino's grandfather, Laureano Estrada, living at the Arroyo De Las Conchas near present Variadero. Abelino's father, Julian Estrada, and his family were in the area of El Corazon in the 1890s.

My father's parents also moved from Los Valles to the Trementina Area. My father, Martin Gonzales, was born January 30, 1896 at Saladito. He was named for the saint listed on the Catholic calendar for that day, Santa Martina.

The 1907 New Mexico Business Directory showed Trementina had a public school in addition to the Presbyterian Mission School. Teofilo Madrid was the Public School Principal and Miss Blake was Principal of the mission school and Postmistress. The Reverend Eliseo Cordova was pastor of the Presbyterian Church; my maternal grandfather, Cecilio Valverde, ran a stage line to Montoya; Juan Pedro Garcia had succeeded Ricardo Gomez as Justice Of The Peace; and Roque Herrera was U.S. Commissioner and proprietor of a general merchandise store.

About 1910, the church building burned down. The people pulled their resources together and rebuilt it. They went back to Los Fuertes and dismantled the church building they had built there a few years before and used the materials to rebuild the structure that had burned down. An old man I met in Los Valles told me he remembered when the *protestantes* had come there in

several wagons from Trementina to dismantle the church building. Only the four walls of the Los Fuertes church building remain today.

Santiago De Jesus Blea died December 21, 1911 at the age of eighty-one. My mother recalled the sad event:

"My grandfather's death so close to Christmas took away alot of the joy we always felt during that season. To make things worse, there came a very big snow storm. The snow was very deep and the ground was frozen solid. I do not know whose decision it was but the men got together and dismantled part of the church flooring. They dug a grave and buried my grandfather inside the church.

"My father was not at the funeral. He was working as a guard in the penitentiary in Santa Fe. My grandmother, Mi Madre Lila, as we called her, died six months later on June 12, 1912."

The records of the Presbyterian Church have these words written after Santiago Blea's name: Fue fiel hasta la muerte en su fe en Cristo Jesús. He was faithful unto death in his faith in Christ Jesus.

When World War I broke out, many young men from the Trementina area answered the call to service just as others did from other places in New Mexico and all over the nation. My father was in Liberal, Kansas working on the railroad when he received word from home concerning his draft notice. Almost immediately he caught a train to Tucumcari. From there he walked all the way to Trementina, a distance of about fifty miles across country. It was February and cold. He was also carrying two suitcases but he reported to the office of the Precinct Justice Of The Peace in time as ordered. He was inducted into the army at Las Vegas on March 4, 1918. He trained at Ft. Riley, Kansas and in less than two months after being inducted, he arrived in France April 27, 1918. He served in the Medical Corps and was exposed to the poison gasses then being used by the Germans.

At least one young man from the Trementina area did not return home. He was young Isaac "Ike" Kirkpatrick who was killed in France. His mother, Alice Taylor Kirkpatrick, later donated a communion table and pulpit to the Trementina church in

his memory. The family lived at La Garita. My father and mother related this to me May 1, 1976.

By the mid 1920s, some families began to leave Trementina to make their livings elsewhere. Some went north to Colorado; others east to Kansas and Texas while others went to other places in the state. My parents would leave Trementina in the Summer months to work as farm laborers in Colorado. They also picked cotton in Texas. Finally during the Depression, they joined other relatives who had moved to Tucumcari. There my father found general labor and farm work. Like many others, he also worked in the W.P.A. and later in the roundhouse for the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Miss Blake retired in 1932 after forty years of mission work and moved to Denver. She died November 19, 1950.

One of the most colorful persons in Trementina was Braulio Vialpando. He was a nephew of Santiago Blea. His parents were José Antonio Vialpando and Maria Yrinea Blea de Vialpando who were married in Las Vegas April 5, 1853. They are buried as mentioned before, in the little cemetery, near the bridge that spans Trementina Creek.

Braulio was to all the children, "Tio Braulio". The older folks referred to him as "Mano Braulio". For many years he had been a member of the *Hermanidad* or *Penitentes*. My mother copied some old *alabados* (hymns) sung by the *Penitentes* she heard Mano Braulio recite. She copied them in a little notebook and passed them on to me.

People say he possessed a treasure of genealogical information, stories, *cuentos*, and *dichos* (sayings). He was a bachelor and an excellent farmer who shared whatever his fields yielded with all the folks around. He lived down by the creek where he grew beans, corn, *calabazias* (squash), watermelons, and sorghum cane. In fact, Trementina was famous for the *miel de cana* (syrup) made there from the sorghum cane. Mano Braulio also supplied folks with *tewas* (moccasins) and *chiquihuites* (woven baskets).

On May 10, 1936, he became a member of La Paz Presbyterian Church at Trementina. He died October 1, 1945 at about age seventy-one.

PAPA BETO

Noberto Jaramillo, Papa Beto, as he was later called, was small in stature but a mighty big man in character. Like David of the Bible, he was first a lowly shepherd boy and later a great prayer warrior. From *cibolero* (buffalo hunter) and *comanche* he went on to become an Elder in his church. From a very young age, he led a very eventful life. He was, as stated before, one of Santiago Blea's sons-in-law. His parents were José Jaramillo and Petrolina Maestas. His wife was Juana Audina Blea. Father Agustín Redón married them in Los Valles February 28, 1870.

It is unfortunate that no one recorded more about his life while he was still living. As a young man he spent many years trading with the Comanche Indians. He also hunted the buffalo and witnessed the slaughter of Indian ponies by the U.S. Cavalry which ended the old way of life for him and the Indians on the plains of Texas.

Later I will relate some incidents in his life. He passed away March 13, 1938 at about 88 years of age. This passage from Scripture is written after his name on the Trementina church membership roster:

*...porque yo se a quien he creido, y estoy cierto que es poderoso para guardar mi deposito para aquel dia.
for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* II Timothy 1: 12.

His favorite hymn was "What A Friend We Have In Jesus". On January 6, 1975, my father and I visited his *compadre*, Don Abelino Estrada, in Las Vegas. I had my tape recorder and when he spied the machine he said laughingly, "Este quiere que le

platique travesuras". ("This one would have me relate some mischief to him.)

I had many questions for him but they would have to wait until we had partaken of the excellent supper his wife, Doña Rosa, had prepared.

"Gracias a Dios. Bendito sea Dios," he said and he began to relate some interesting stories of old. He began by naming those of *La Gaviilla de Silva* (Silva Gang of the 1890s) who he had personally known: Martin Blea, Bartolo Cordova, Refugio Esquibel, and José Chavez y Chavez.

Don Abelino recalled working at a large cattle ranch one year during roundup and branding time. "José Chavez y Chavez was among several men at that roundup. One day after the noon meal, one of the men proposed a shooting match. Chavez y Chavez then pulled a board off a crate and handed it to my father and said, 'Anda pon esta tabla alla en aquella palmitilla.' ('Here, go place this board over there against that yucca.')

"My father had walked a ways when Chavez y Chavez discharged his six-shooter and the board flew from my father's hand. This brought on a roar of laughter from the other *vaqueros*. My father calmly retrieved the board and placed it at the center of the yucca. These noon-time gatherings were always occasions for such mischief." More about Chavez y Chavez later.

"Don Abelino", I asked, "What can you tell me about Papa Beto?" (As stated before, Noberto Jaramillo was affectionally called "Papa Beto" by almost everyone in Trementina).

"Now there was a man!", he said. "Ese hombre si fue muy hombre desde muy chiquito y un buen Cristiano despues tambien."
("That man was every bit a man even from childhood and later on a good Christian too.")

"I suppose you have heard about the time he was almost taken captive by Indians?" I replied that I had heard the story several times from different people but that I always enjoyed hearing it every time.

"It happened when he was nine or ten years old. Young Beto was hired out as a *pastor* (shepherd) by his father to a rico who had large flocks of sheep grazing out in the Trementina country."

"Un viejo sinvergüenza que andava con el se fue y lo dejo solo cuidando las borregas." ("A shameless old rascal who tended the flock with him took off and left him alone with the sheep.")

"He was with his flock at a place known as 'La Rendija' not far from El Cerro Del Corazón (Corazón Hill). He had been alone several days and was expecting the *rico's caporal* to come to his camp any day with provisions and also to check on things for it was among the *caporal's* duties to oversee his *parron's* herders.

"One day the lad saw in the distance several riders approaching his sheep camp. Thinking they were men from the rancho, he decided to spin a small top while he awaited their arrival. Before he knew it, the horsemen thundered into his little camp. But they were not the men he was expecting: they turned out to be several Indians.

"One of the Indians quickly dismounted, walked up to the lad and proceeded to tear the boy's shirt off. When the boy took off his shirt the Indian grabbed it from him and tried in vain to get into the shirt. His actions must have been very comical for they made his companions laugh at his attempts to fit himself into the small shirt. In his anger he picked up the small boy and turned him upside down. The top dropped to the ground and another Indian dismounted and picked it up.

"Apparently, the Indians had never seen a top for they all stared at it. After the boy picked himself up from the ground where his assailant had dropped him, the Indian gave him the top and through signs and grunts asked what it was. Young Beto then spun the top. The Indians watched in amazement as the toy gy-rated around and around. After it stopped, one of the Indians tried but failed to make it spin. This brought on more laughter. They then had the boy spin it again and again.

"After a while, the Indians left but not before they stripped the lad of all his clothing and left him completely naked. Beto then drove his flock to the top of a mesa above his camp and hid in some tall sotol or bear grass, fearing the Indians' return.

"His fears materialized for the Indians returned at dusk. From his hiding place he could hear them calling, 'Cacheé, Cacheé!' ("Cacheé" was a corruption of the name "José". Indians referred to

all Mexican males as "José" because it was indeed a very common name. Boys were named José in honor of St. Joseph. Girls were named Maria in honor of The Virgin.)

"The boy's refusal to answer and come out of hiding angered the Indians. They burned his poor little camp, then left. A couple of days later, the boy's *parrones* did come. They found him naked but still faithfully tending his sheep.

I heard a slightly different version of this same story from one of Papa Beto's sons, Don Telesfor Jaramillo, also of Las Vegas. He stated that his father used to sleep inside the larger sotol bushes and that when tending sheep, he always had a milk goat with him for a fresh supply of milk. He added that the Indians involved in this incident were Apaches. Also, one of young Beto's favorite pastimes as a shepherd boy was hurling stones with his slingshot at a bear that occasionally would come out of a nearby canyon.

Later on young Beto and others from his village hired out as teamsters and herders with the wealthy Romero family of Las Vegas who operated a freighting business between New Mexico and Westport Landing, Missouri, now part of Kansas City. The boys' jobs were to fill gunny sacks that were hung on the sides of the wagons with buffalo chips. The chips were used for cooking fires as wood was scarce and often unavailable on the plains. Other duties included tending the oxen and other animals.

In May of 1865, a young cavalry officer reported that the wagon train he and his men had escorted from Ft. Bascom, New Mexico to Ft. Larned, Kansas was manned mostly by boys. "Most wagon hands were boys for teamsters and herders and part of the grown men were cripples." Santa Fe Gazette, June 17, 1865.

I was also privileged to meet another of Papa Beto's sons, Don David Jaramillo. He related that his father had made the trip to Missouri three or four times. On one of the return trips somewhere in the vicinity of the Great Bend, their wagon train was attacked by Indians.

One of Beto's companions, a lad from Los Valles named Agustín, was wounded. An Indian dismounted and ran to where the boy had fallen. He pulled out his knife and scalped the youth alive. The Indians also killed an older man but Beto, who was of

small stature, hid inside a barrel.

Soldiers from Ft. Larned came to the wagon train's rescue.

Young Agustín survived. He was taken to the army post and treated for his wounds. After several months, he returned to New Mexico with another train.

From Don Abelino, Don Telesfor, and others, I also heard of Papa Beto's many trips to the Staked Plains to trade with the Comanches and to hunt buffalo. I began with an article that appeared in the *Albuquerque Review* on Saturday May 12, 1872, page 2 entitled "The Ciboleros":

"Every year after the harvest is gathered and before the pastures get dry and poor, large caravans of all sorts of vehicles, from the two wheel cart to the big prairie schooner, may be seen winding their way towards the Staked Plains. The animals (Buffalo) are then fat and close together in large droves."

"The owners of the ponies are generally the hunters. With a long lance in hand, he spurs his mustang alongside some young bull and swift as lightning flashes the weapon through the ribs behind the shoulder to penetrate the heart."

"If a lucky hit is made, horse and rider go on to the next noble animal of the plains, leaving the carcass behind for the drivers of the train to skin and cut up for drying. If the animal is only hurt, then commences the dangerous game of attack and turn, the pony in most cases obeying the hand without a touch of the reins, jumping aside or turning on its hind feet when attacked and running alongside but never ahead to give the rider a chance to use his weapon.

Don Telesfor told me about the *ciboleros* or buffalo hunters in almost the same words. After the harvest when the weather begins getting cold, the *ciboleros* would begin making preparations to go to the Llano for the annual buffalo hunt.

Hunting parties from the villages along the Gallinas River would gather at Chaperito and soon a large caravan of *carretas* and wagons would be making their way to the buffalo country."

"My grandfather, Santiago Blea, provided the ox-carts and wagons from Los Fuertes but the majority of the wagons were from Chaperito. My father was on several occasions, the

Mayordomo or Trail Boss of the party that went from San Agustín and Los Fuertes. He knew the entire Llano very well.

"El iba mucho a Los Cumanches." ("He went out to trade with the Comanches alot")

"He used to mention places like Quitaque, El Palo Duro, *Rio De Las Lenguas* (Tongues River), Las Barrancas Amarillas, and others."

"Each village generally had its own *casador* or hunter and at least one trained horse. My grandfather had a white mare that was trained especially for hunting buffalo and used only for that purpose. His tall lanky nephew, my *Tio* Juan Bautista Martinez, was the *casador* from Los Valles. He had the reputation for being the best *casador* or lancer in that part of the country. Since childhood, my *tio* Juan Bautista had accompanied the *ciboleros* to the *Llano*. He knew the buffalo well. His horsemanship and skill with the lance were second to none.

"My father told me that my *Tio* Juan would kill twelve to eighteen animals during one single corrida or run."

"Se metia entre el hatajo y les picaba lo mismo para un lado que para el otro. Hacia tenderete de cibolos. Y los descogia porque el sabia aguasales estaban buenos."

"He would charge into the midst of the herd choosing his quarry well. He would thrust the point of his lance into their sides and leave dead or dying animals in his wake for other members of the hunting party to bleed, skin, and process."

"My uncle Juan once told me that during the chase, the dust was so thick it was almost impossible to see. My *tio* Juan later owned his own hunting horse. He called it 'El Cucharas'."

"One time a man from Chaperito contracted with my uncle Juan Bautista to be the *casador* for his party. This left my grandfather with no one to be the lancer for the group from Los Valles. Another of my uncles, José Antonio Vialpando, volunteered. He persuaded my grandfather to let him be the *casador* that year.

"The decision to allow *tio* José Antonio to be the *casador* cost my grandfather his mare and nearly cost my uncle his life. During the chase, a buffalo lunged at him and disemboweled the mare. When the dust cleared, a group of young men from the hunting

SI party found my uncle José Antonio crying. They laughed and made fun of him. My father finally stepped in and told the men to leave my uncle alone. The party from Los Valles did not return empty-handed thanks to my uncle Juan Bautista. He fulfilled his obligation to the man from Chaperito and then helped his kin from Los Valles.

Don Telesfor told me of an incident involving *tio* Juan Bautista that his father told him.

“One evening during a hunting trip, two Indians came into their camp apparently as friends. One of the party, a youth known for being reckless, pulled a revolver and fired killing one of the Indians. The other sprang to his feet and ran out of the camp as fast as he could.”

“Immediately, my *tio* Juan jumped up and ran in pursuit. He knew that the Indian had to be stopped before he reached his *rancheria* with the report of the treachery that had been dealt them by the *ciboleros*.”

“Tio Juan was a tall, lean, youth, very agile and fast. When the Indian realized that the young man who was armed only with a knife would soon catch up, he turned and fitted an arrow to the string of his bow but *tio* Juan leaped upon him and plunged the knife into his chest.”

Don Abelino related another story about a neighbor of his named George Echols. Echols lived near Trementina and had a small ranch along Trementina Creek.

“I remember the time when Echols was abducted and taken to Las Cautivas* and kept a prisoner for several days by some men who also stole his cattle. Echols had sold twelve steers to a gringo who very cleverly changed the “12” to a “72” on the bill of sale. When he and his men came for the cattle, they forced Echols to accompany them to a canyon on our place where they kept him tied up for two days while they rounded up the rest of his herd. They then took him to Las Cautivas where they chained him to a post or beam inside a *jacal* (shack). In the meantime, the *ladrones* (thieves) drove the stolen cattle to the railroad stock pens at Montoya and shipped them to Kansas City.

“Being a bachelor, none of the neighbors missed him at first.

*El dijuntito** Ricardo Gomez used to ride by his place every morning and after passing by several mornings without seeing Echols, he decided to investigate. In the summertime, Echols slept outdoors in a bedroll on a wagon.

* Las Cautivas (The Captives, feminine gender) is the name early Hispanos gave to the rugged mesa and canyon country south of Montoya. The name indicates that perhaps female captives were either bought or ransomed in its lonely, rugged and rattle snake infested canyons.

* Difunto means defunct or deceased. The older Hispanos of New Mexico still prefix the term “difunto” to the name of a person no longer living. Most often it is pronounced “dijuntito” (dee-hoon-tow).

“Several days later, Echols arrived back in Trementina with the mail carrier from Montoya. By this time, the particulars concerning his abduction and the theft of his cattle were the talk of the town. People jokingly talked of how Echols had walked to Montoya carrying on his back the post to which his chains were still attached.

“I teased him afterwards by telling him that I had expected to see him arrive in town still dragging the stake he had been tied to behind him.”

“Pero hombre, yo pense que te iba ver venir con la estaca arrastrando.”

“Era buena gente y muy buen vecino.” (“He was good people and a very good neighbor.”)

“George Echols also raised the sweetest, juiciest, watermelons around Trementina.”

The Echols incident made for some exciting reading in a couple of Quay County newspapers. The following is the story as it appeared in *The Montoya Republican* and *The Tucumcari Sun*:

“A Daring Cattle Theft”

One of the most daring cattle thefts ever perpetrated in any

county was pulled off near here last week. The story told about town reads like a Jesse James or Cole Younger episode and the remarkable feature of it all is the characters in the drama are all well known to everyone in this vicinity.

The story told here by the victim, George Eckels, an old bachelor living near Trementina, is as follows: About three weeks ago he sold about twenty head of cattle to Claud Carter and a few days later Carter called at Eckels' house and on the pretense of wanting to look at more cattle, he and Eckels rode off in search of the stock. When they reached a nearby canyon, Ross Carter appeared on the scene and Eckels was forcibly secured and carried to a remote place and chained to a tree. He was kept there a prisoner and guarded by Ross Carter for two days and then moved by night to a dugout near the A.C. Lipe place about nine miles southwest of Montoya where he was kept a prisoner for thirteen days, guarded by day and fed by night by Ross Carter.

In the meantime, Claud Carter drove off Eckels' entire herd of beef cattle numbering seventy-three head, twenty of which he had paid for and shipped them to Kansas City. When the draft for the cattle was received and same cashed by the Carter boys, they left the country, presumably going to Old Mexico.

They left their victim chained in the dugout where they had him kept a prisoner but Eckels managed to free himself in some way from the three locks he was chained with by his kidnapers. Eckels being a single man was not missed from his usual walks therefore no one knew or suspected other than Eckels the old bachelor was doing his daily chores on his ranch supremely happy in every tenor of his single blessed ways, when as a matter of fact he was languishing, a prisoner, in a lonely dugout several miles from his home and his life's accumulations being stolen in broad daylight in regular Jesse James style.

So far, nothing has been heard from the Carters and Eckels seems to be satisfied to let things drift, afraid to swear out a complaint against the robbers, fearing that he might be killed if he did.*

* *The Montoya Republican*, October 9, 1914.

"Frontier Days Again"

News reached Tucumcari the early part of this week of one of the most sensational robberies that has ever taken place in this county. Some two weeks ago so the story goes, Claud Carter, living near Ima, went to George Eckels' ranch at Trementina, seventy miles north of Montoya, and forced him to accompany them to Bull Canyon, about ten miles from Ima. There they chained him and locked him up in a dugout on the Reeves place. Here Eckels was kept in confinement for thirteen days, younger Ross Carter keeping guard over him.

In the meantime, Claud Carter went to Eckels' ranch and drove some seventy head of cattle to Montoya, loaded them on the cars and shipped them to Kansas City, Missouri. He waited until he got the returns, drawing the money out of the First National Bank of Santa Rosa. Both the Carter boys then escaped, it is thought, to Old Mexico.

The Carters came from Mexico, the older one more than a year ago, the younger one having been here but a few months. The whole affair sounded like a story in a yellow-back novel, but it is true nevertheless.

Later an interview with one familiar to some extent with this robbery, gives some of the details and why the action was taken to secure the money in this manner.

These boys and their father and mother resided in Mexico. It seems the boys got into some kind of trouble while there and one of them was sent to jail. The other wired to a relative for money, stating that it was a life and death proposition. The money was procured and they were driven from their home during the revolution, leaving them with only the clothes on their backs. They were greatly in debt and the older of the boys made a statement to a member of the family saying that he could not procure enough money to pay his honest debts and that he was going to help his gray-haired father and mother, that the authorities might send him to hell but his friends and creditors would not suffer for it.*

* *The Tucumcari Sun*, October 9, 1914.

Don Abelino continued with the story: "Some people used to say that Isaias Muniz was one of the men hired by those gringos to drive Echols' herd to Montoya but I don't know. The old man did have a reputation for being violent and atrocious and some people did dislike him. However, he was a good friend to me and my father. He and his brother Jacobo were muy vaqueros (great cowboys).

"One day Isaias and I were riding in search of some stray cows when a *liebre* (jackrabbit) suddenly jumped in front of us and started running. He pulled out his gun very rapidly and shot the jackrabbit behind the ears."

"¡Que hombre pa la pistola y el rifle era ese!"

"What a good shot that man was with a pistol or rifle!"

About the time of the Echols incident, the following story appeared in another Tucumcari newspaper concerning an I.F. Muniz who was arrested for shooting up the town. Was he Isaias Muniz, Don Abelino's friend?

"Gun Toter Gets In Bad"

I. F. Muniz, an old man, came to town a few days ago and after taking on a good amount of firepower, he says he bought a six-shooter. He could not wait but turned her loose and it seemed to be in good shape. He was arrested and the judge was obliged to assess the minimum fine which was \$50 and the trimmings amounting to \$60.

After a few days his friends succeeded in raising enough money to release him from the chain gang. This gun-toting business is a costly passtime and this experience will be or should be of value to others.*

* The *Tucumcari News* and *Tucumcari Times*, October 1, 1914.

Don Abelino was born January 12, 1886 in Variadero near Trementina. As a young man, he helped his father, Julian, operate a small stage line and mail service. He and his father ranched and for a time, also freighted between Las Vegas and Liberty.

Although bed-ridden for almost two years before his death, Don Abelino's memory was very good and his wit still very sharp.

He rode with me one day from Las Vegas to Tucumcari. As we traveled he pointed out places and mentioned names of people from the days of old. He shared alot of stories on that trip but unfortunately, I did not have my tape recorder with me.

Don Abelino passed away September 6, 1976. He is buried near my father and mother, his compadres, at Trementina.

MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER

José Cecilio Valverde, my maternal grandfather, was born November 22, 1866 in Los Valles De San Agustín. A few days later on December 5th, he was baptized by Father J. Agustín Redón. His parents were José Macedonio Valverde and Dolores Maestas de Valverde. They were married April 3, 1856 in Las Vegas by Father Pinard. Macedonio and Dolores had seven children.

My mother did not know very much about her paternal grandparents except that Macedonio at one time made his living breaking horses for a man who supplied horses to the military. On July 25, 1869, Macedonio was on his way to San Hilarío, a small settlement on the Rio Colorado, to attend and participate in the activities of *Las Fiestas De El Dia De Santiago* (Feast Of Saint James).

The 25th of July used to be a great day in New Mexico because St. James is the Patron Saint of Spain. People came from all over to hear Mass in honor of Santiago and fellowship with old friends. There was dancing and merry-making too. The festivities also provided an opportunity for boys and girls to meet. The *corrida de gallos* (rooster pulls) was a very popular event and provided an opportunity for *vagueros* to prove their riding skills.

Macedonio's horse stepped into a gopher hole. He was thrown to the ground and died of a broken neck. He is buried at Los Valles. His grave is still plainly marked.

His widow was fortunate in that her mother and Macedonio's elderly parents lived nearby. However, when Cecilio was about ten years old, his grandparents moved down the Pecos River to Puerto de Luna. He and his older sister, Reyes, went with them.

Prominent men of that time were running thousands of sheep and cattle in the area around Puerto de Luna. One of these men was Don Alejandro Grzeczachowski. He was highly educated and spoke several languages. Don Alejandro was also known as El Padre Polaco for he was an ordained Roman Catholic Priest. Sometime after the Civil War skirmishes in New Mexico, he gave up his priestly duties and turned to business interests. He was the proprietor of a large mercantile store in Puerto de Luna. The census for 1880 also listed his occupation as farmer and stockraiser.

The 1880 census also listed my grandfather and his sister as "servants" in Don Alejandro's household. My grandfather spent several years in Don Alejandro's service, from the age of eleven as a shepherd boy until his late teens as a cowboy. According to my mother and my uncle Macedon, when my grandfather would mention Don Alejandro, it was always with great affection and respect.

In my research I came across a short article in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* dated April 23, 1864 that mentioned Don Alejandro:

"This gentleman resides a short distance from the village where Don Juan María Baca lives (Upper Las Vegas). He is a native of Poland and has been a few years in New Mexico. He is an ordained priest of the Catholic Church. For a time after his arrival in the territory, he was placed in charge of a parish by Bishop Lamy. He has also been a chaplain in a regiment of New Mexico Volunteers. He is a man of excellent character and highly esteemed by the Bishop. His tastes however led him to the bustle of business. He has been relieved from the charge of his parish and gone to the acquisition of wealth by raising sheep and cattle and freighting from the states. He is a well-bred and intelligent gentleman, a warm and reliable friend, and a kind and just neighbor. By William Manderfield.

During the time my grandfather worked for Don Alejandro, he met Billy the Kid many times. Bilicito, as my grandfather referred to Billy, would often spend the nights in their sheepcamps.

Young Cecilio later returned to Los Valles De San Agustín and on January 7, 1888, married María Encarnación Blea. He was

twenty-two and she was nineteen. Their padrinos were Marcos Gonzales and his wife, Tomasita Lucero de Gonzales. Marcos was my paternal grandfather's brother. There was a double wedding that day. María Encarnación's brother, José de Los Angeles Blea, married María Juliania Madrid, daughter of Pablo Madrid and Pablita Garcia de Madrid.

Cecilio worked as a cowboy. He later operated a small stage line between the railroad town of Montoya and Sabinoso on the Rio Colorado (Canadian River). He was a guard at the Territorial Pen from 1911-1913. He also worked as a jailer in Las Vegas and as a ranch hand for the Bell Ranch. In 1952, I met Don Leopoldo Andrada who lived to be over 100 years old. When I mentioned that I was Cecilio Valverde's grandson, he said, "¡Valgame Dios!"* "Yo y Cecilio fuimos vaqueros y tambien muy buenos amigos. ("God bless my soul! Cecilio and I were cowboys and also very good friends.")

* ("Valgame Dios" is a term used mostly by old-timers to express surprise, disgust, disappointment or pleasure. The tone of voice determines the meaning. Its literal meaning is "Lord, praise me" but is equivalent to "God bless my soul.")

My grandparents had twelve children and many grandchildren. My grandmother died June 15, 1918 My grandfather died February 10, 1933. Both are buried at Trementina.

INCIDENT AT CORAZON

El Señor Don Florentino Gonzales, his wife Felilde, and their three children, David, Guillermo, and Lucia, lived on their small ranch in southern San Miguel County near El Cerro Del Corazon. The family was very well liked and respected by neighbors and friends.

Don Florentino and his family were asleep the night of October 12, 1899 when three strangers mounted on vigorous and lively horses arrived at their home around midnight. The door of the house was slightly open and Don Florentino was awakened by the sound of hoofbeats. Two of the strangers dismounted while the third remained on his horse. Gonzales and the two men arrived at the door almost simultaneously. The two men then directed their words at Gonzales asking him if there were any strangers inside his house. Their tone of voice was clothed in authority as if they were lawmen in search of criminals. Gonzales answered in the negative but they appeared dissatisfied with his answer and called upon him for a light so they could conduct a search of his house.

It is probable that Gonzales did believe they were lawmen who suspected he had someone hidden in his house for he proceeded to obey their command. When he struck a match to light the candle, the two supposed officials fired their pistols hitting Gonzales in the back.

By this time the other members of Señor Gonzales' family were also awake and his wife, upon hearing the shots, took advantage of the confusion that followed and fled without being seen to get help from the neighbors. David, the oldest boy, followed his mother but was seen running out of the house by the man on horseback and was shot through the shoulder. He fell by a wood-

pile and was left for dead by the outlaw. However, he later managed to make his way inside the barn where he hid inside a haystack.

Mrs. Gonzales ran barefoot in the dark towards the closest neighbor who lived three miles away. To get there she would have to cross a canyon and travel over rough and rocky terrain. But in her frightened state of panic the poor, unfortunate woman fell into a crevice between two large rocks surrounded by cacti. She was so badly injured from the fall and by the spines that it became impossible for her to move. There the poor woman remained until daybreak. Nine year-old Lucia, who was totally blind, remained in the house with her seven year-old brother. The little boy later reported that the outlaws had pointed a rifle at his forehead and threatened to shoot him if he did not tell them of the whereabouts of his mother. After the murderers left, the wounded boy returned to the house and remained there with his brother and sister until the following day when his mother and some neighbors arrived.

Upon examination of Gonzales' body, it was found that there were several other bullet wounds besides the two in his back which led to believe that the first two shots had not killed him. From the state of things in the room, it was also believed that he had made a strong defense. Also, Gonzales may have wounded one of the killers with his own pistol for there were drops of blood outside the house where they had mounted their horses. The murder of Don Florentino and the sacking of his home netted the killers twelve dollars and his rifle.

The following day, word of Gonzales' murder reached Deputy Sheriff Nicolas Cordova who happened to be in the vicinity. Cordova recruited ten men from Chaperito and two from El Corazon to accompany him in pursuing the killers.

The posse easily picked up the outlaws' trail and followed it up the mesas. However, by the end of the day Cordova refused to pursue any further for fear of being ambushed in the thickly-wooded country. Furthermore, he refused to grant permission to those who wanted to follow the fresh tracks on their own. The members of the posse, nearly all of who were related to the deceased, argued insistently with the deputy in favor of following the

trail of the killers but in vain.¹

Deputy Cordova's refusal to continue the chase further reinforced citizens' dissatisfaction with law enforcement in San Miguel County. There had been recent complaints from people residing in the southwest part of the county about law officials being apathetic to the southwest portion and to the outlaw gang known as "La Gavilla de Humanitarios" (The Humanitarian Gang) killing and robbing there.² This gang had its headquarters in that portion of the county and was made up of "two Mexicans and one Americano". In early October, this trio robbed the store of Don Carlos Martinez at Chaperito. Previously, they had assaulted the sheep camp of Don Serapio Romero and robbed the general store and cantina at Trementina.³

Don Ricardo Gomez, known in the county as "El Wyoming", was the proprietor of the Trementina establishment. He reported that after sacking his place, the outlaws mounted their horses and led him and a customer at gun point a short distance from the store. However, luck or Providence was with them that night; the outlaws released them after instructing them to tell law enforcement officials looking for them that they were heading for Texas.⁴

La Voz Del Pueblo echoed the sentiments of many San Miguel County residents when it called Don Florentino Gonzales "one of the best and most honest citizens in that portion of the county where he lived. His death so cowardly perpetrated, has shaken all the good citizens of the county."⁵

La Voz further commented, "When a rich and prominent man or a politician is murdered, the governor sees to it that special efforts are made to apprehend the killers; liberal rewards are offered, which is good but why isn't the same done when a poor but honorable man is murdered, as was Don Florentino Gonzales.⁵ Don Florentino Gonzales was not related to this writer. However, his grandson also named Florentino, married my cousin, Lucy Madrid. Don Florentino's killers were later supposedly captured and brought to justice by Guadalupe County Sheriff, Don Placido Baca.

- 1 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, October 21, 1899.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid. October 7, 1899.
- 4 Ibid. October 21, 1899.
- 5 Ibid.

EL PUERTAS

While doing research I came across the name of a Comanche chief named Puertas. I found his name occasionally mentioned in military reports and in Santa Fe newspapers of the 1850's and 1860s.

Puertas was supposedly the grandson of María Baca of Tomé who was captured by the Comanches during a raid in May of 1777. The events leading to her captivity are a mixture of history and legend and quite interesting.

Puertas was chief of one of the smaller bands of Yamparica (Yam Eaters) Comanches whose principal home was in west Texas along the Rio Negro (False Washita). Puertas' band often came to the New Mexican settlements on the eastern frontier where they visited and traded with their many friends.

One of the principal men with whom Puertas had a great friendship was Don José Feliz Ulibarri of Chaperito. Don José had traded with the Comanches for many years, long before the Americans made "Comanchero" a word of reproach and a badge of infamy. Don José was highly respected by the Indians as well as by military and civilian government authorities.

In late October of 1860, a party of between twenty-five and thirty men, women, and children came to Chaperito to trade with Señor Ulibarri. The Comanches brought with them several mules. Having arrived early in the day, they had finished purchasing and were ready to go away in the evening but Señor Ulibarri told them they could remain all night, at the same time assuring them that they would encounter no danger. The Comanches agreed to remain until morning.

Between nine and ten o' clock at night when some had laid