

Martinez was riding so he shot him in the forehead and burned his body."²

On May 26, 1896, José Chavez y Chavez was arraigned for the murder of Gabriel Sandoval. He had a quick trial and was found guilty of murder in the first degree. "It is said that José Chavez y Chavez never turned color or gave the least sign of emotion when the verdict of guilty was read."³

He was retried in December and sentenced to hang. His case was appealed to the State Supreme Court but the sentence was upheld. The sentence was commuted to life in prison by then Governor Otero on November 20, 1897.

Chavez arrived at the Territorial Pen three days later. Penitentiary records show he was 46 years of age; weight 201; 5'-10"; gray eyes; and a dark complexion. He also had two bullet scars on the calf of his left leg: two scars on the thigh of his left leg caused by a dog bite (?) and one scar on his chin caused by "kick of horse".

Chavez was apparently a model prisoner. He served a little over eleven years of his sentence, part of that time in charge of other prisoners engaged in work on public roads of the Territory. In 1907, Governor Curry received several letters from several citizens of Lincoln County pleading for pardon and release of Chavez y Chavez. Some of the letters were from prominent stock raisers. Governor Curry paroled Chavez February 1, 1909.⁴

- 1 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, September 29, 1894.
- 2 *Ibid*, November 23, 1895.
- 3 *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, June 1, 1896.
- 4 Records of the Penitentiary.

José Chavez y Chavez, like Nicolas Aragon, also lived in the Santa Rosa area after his release from prison. As stated before, I visited with Don Luis Duran and with Don Abel and Doña Eufelia Saiz who knew both men.

Doña Eufelia recalled, "My aunt Rupertita later married José Chavez y Chavez. they lived in Milagro where Don José was a *trasmolador de borregas* (sheep shearer)."

Don Luis taught school in San Ignacio just west of Santa Rosa

from 1911-1918 and from 1922-1925. When he heard that Chavez y Chavez was at a friend's house, he went to visit him because Don Luis' father and Chavez had been good friends. Chavez told Don Luis, "Si tu papa' estuviera vivo, otra fuera mi camisa." It was his way of saying, "If your father were alive, my lot in life would have been different."

"Chavez once assured my father that as long as he (Chavez) was around, he had nothing to fear and nothing he owned would ever be stolen. My father at one time had over 10,000 sheep." Don Luis was born in Los Torres, three miles north of Chaparito on the Gallinas River. He was the son of Don Vivian Duran and Doña Sista Valverde. I had the pleasure of visiting with him in his home in Santa Rosa in October, 1978.

In January, 1979, I visited the home of 94 year-old Don Abel Saiz and his wife, Doña Eufelia. Like Don Luis, they were very nice and hospitable people. I regret that I did not get to know them better.

Some of the most wonderful and kindest folks I have ever met were those I met while gathering stories of old, some of which are included in this book. I can truly say there are no more hospitable people any where than the dear elderly folks of the old days and old ways. They shared their best cups of coffee and finest most delicious New Mexican dishes during my visits to their humble homes.

Don Abel was born Christmas Day, 1884 in La Junta, a small village located at the confluence of the Pecos and Gallinas Rivers. La Junta is not far from where Aragon fought the sheriff's posse exactly one month later in January, 1885. His parents were Don Francisco Saiz and Doña Estefanita Cordova de Saiz. He was raised by his maternal grandfather, Don Juan Agustín Cordova. Don Abel's grandparents moved to La Pintada when he was twelve years old.

Doña Eufelia was also born in La Junta March 11, 1902. Her parents were Don Albino Baca and Doña Irene Tafoya. Doña Eufelia and Don Abel were married in Anton Chico in the Summer of 1924.

Why were men like Nicolas Aragon, José Chavez y Chavez,

"El Bilicito", as some Hispanos called Billy the Kid, romanticized and made into legendary heroes? Perhaps it is because of our recalcitrant nature. Even today, we often view in a romantic light, the deeds of criminals and other shameless and unprincipled rogues in our society.

We must also take into consideration the social conditions that existed in early New Mexico. The majority of Hispanic New Mexicans were illiterate. It was always the policy of Spain and Mexico to keep the general population in a state of ignorance, education being only for the privileged *rico* class.

Ignorance also breeds superstition and fear. Moreover, ignorant, uneducated people are easier to dominate and be taken advantage of. The almost non-existence of education also promoted and maintained the system of Peonage that prevailed even after the coming of the Americans. This feudal system of *patron* and *peon* was advantageous to the *rico* class and later to some Anglo entrepreneurs.

In this system of servitude, the poorer, uneducated Hispano played a subservient role and was generally looked down upon by the new arrivals. The lack of a public education system and the prejudices of Eastern politicians against the "mixed Iberian-Indian" population of New Mexico were the chief reasons, I believe, that kept New Mexico from obtaining statehood for so long.

My uncle Felipe Montaña related that about 1899, he went with his father to a meeting of cattle and sheep raisers in Alamogordo. One of the main topics discussed was the need for public schools. One of those present asked, "How can we expect to attain equality with the rest of the nation if our children are not given the opportunity of an education?"

But there were those at the meeting who were opposed to public education as it would mean that taxes would have to be collected to pay for it. One of these men, a well-known Anglo whose sheep numbered in the tens of thousands, made a disparaging remark. "To educate a Mexican," he said, "is to ruin a good shepherd."

The remark angered the majority of those present. The man

then left the meeting, afraid that harm would come to him if he remained.

My mother told me of the time some Anglo missionaries visited the Trementina Presbyterian mission. They brought with them a "Victrola" phonograph which they played for the people. One of my mother's uncles, an old former buffalo hunter, heard the songs played. The following day he told his wife, "Tonight we will go again to hear those little people who live inside that box."

No one can deny that conditions generally improved after the United States took possession of New Mexico. But there were also new difficulties to overcome. With the new government came new laws and a new language. Sometimes the cultures clashed creating a spirit of mistrust and often hatred between the two peoples.

With few exceptions, accounts of early American visitors to New Mexico depicted the native population as lazy, cowardly, and boorish. The Anglo pioneers saw themselves as rough and manly and certainly more cultured. The following story is an example of a clash between the two peoples.

INCIDENT IN OLD TOWN

On July 18, 1894, Las Vegas Constable José Martínez and two Deputies, Simon Aragon and Donaciano Sandoval, were sent to "Old Town" Las Vegas to arrest a local trouble maker and bounty hunter named Billy Green, his two brothers, Eli, and Albert, and a Mexican from Chihuahua named Jesus Villascas alias "El Yesse".¹

Twenty-seven year-old Billy Green had served time in the Territorial Pen (1887-1888) for horse stealing.² Green enjoyed tracking down fugitives from justice. He had apparently tried but failed on several occasions to acquire the badge of a lawman.

Earlier that day, the Greens had gone to bring in a man named Nestor Gallegos who had been implicated in a recent murder. The Greens brought Gallegos into town and placed him in jail although Gallegos was badly wounded. Gallegos died in jail. His dying words were that he had done nothing to cause Green to shoot him.

Gallegos' wife also came into town to the office of the Precinct Justice Of The Peace and in a sworn statement declared that Billy Green had shot her husband without cause.³

The Justice Of The Peace sent the three officers to arrest the Greens and "Yesse". About 9:00 P.M., the officers located the four men in a restaurant owned by Billy's wife in old town. The Greens were already prepared; when told they were under arrest, they pulled their guns out and shot out the lights and in their fire, shot and killed Sandoval.

When Sheriff Lorenzo Lopez and his deputies arrived at the scene, the Greens were holed out in the kitchen and refused to give up. New Town Marshal Clay intervened and acted as mediator between the sheriff and the Greens. Clay also asked for help from

the mayor of New Town who then sent for some army troops stationed in the town. (Because of a nation-wide rail strike, troops were sent to different locations to protect railroad properties and rail shipments) According to the *Las Vegas Optic*, both Clay and the mayor acted wrongfully in the matter.⁴

A lieutenant and a detail of troops arrived at the scene in response to the mayor's call for help. According to *La Voz Del Pueblo* and *The Optic*, "The soldiers behaved in a despotic and uncivilized manner completely ignoring the authority of the Sheriff."⁵

Almost immediately, the troops set upon the crowd of people who had gathered at the scene to watch the arrest of "the one who had had a human being for breakfast and another for supper".⁶

The troops dispersed the crowd by using bayonet and saber blows. One of the soldiers slapped Sheriff Lopez with the side of his bayonet. The lieutenant narrowly escaped receiving a bullet in the head by "an intrepid young man" who the papers did not name but who afterwards I learned was the sheriff's nephew, Don Secundino Romero.⁷

My parents, uncles and other old timers who knew Don Secundino all agreed he was one of the finest persons in northeastern New Mexico. Don Secundino, being from very prominent families, the Romeros and Lopez', was well educated but very close to the common people who loved and respected him very much.

The Greens surrendered to the troops and were taken to jail in New Town. The Mexican was turned over to the sheriff. As the Greens were led away, Billy mocked and clowned saying he would never allow himself to be arrested by a Mexican.⁸

Both the *Optic* and *La Voz* condemned the interference by the troops. The *Optic* stated that the civil law had been "pistol-whipped". "The military, without authority, has usurped the powers of civil authorities."

La Voz stated, "Not only were they not content with ignoring the sheriff but one of the soldiers, in an act of open disrespect, contemptuously struck the sheriff a blow with his bayonet. Their behavior was not worthy of a body of civilized men."⁹

The Greens were later released on \$2500 bond. They immediately circulated petitions in town asking that the U.S. Marshal deputize them. They wanted the authority to arm themselves because they feared being killed by Mexicans.¹⁰

- 1 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, July 28, 1894.
- 2 Records Of The Territorial Pen. State Records Center, Santa Fe.
- 3 *El Independiente*, July 28, 1894.
- 4 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, July 28, 1894.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *El Independiente*, July 28, 1894.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, July 28, 1894.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, August 4, 1894.

THE TREASURE OF MESA RICA

Don Sirlilio Aragon shared this story with me. When he was working for the Southern Pacific Railroad near Pastura, he became friends with an older gentleman named Don Leandro. Don Leandro had a large sheep ranch at Los Terreros east of Pastura. One day he told Don Sirlilio how he had acquired his wealth.

Don Leandro's family lived near San Hilario on the Rio Colorado (Canadian River) in the 1870s. One day his father found a badly wounded Indian in the nearby hills. He carried him home and he and his wife treated his wounds.

The Indian's recovery was slow and it gave him and Don Leandro's family time to get acquainted and eventually an opportunity to develop a deep friendship. In time the Indian fully recovered and instead of leaving, he remained, always helping out with the work around the small ranch. With the passing of time he came to be accepted as one of the family.

As Leandro grew into a young man, the Indian began to grow old and become ill. When he felt that he would not live too much longer, he told the family that many years before, he and two of his friends had buried two mules laden with gold up on the Mesa Rica. Young Leandro and the old Indian took digging tools and provisions and rode up the rugged mesa to the place where they uncovered the treasure the Indians had buried many years before.

BILLY THE KID'S RIFLE

In 1963, Don Alberto Gutierrez who was born in 1888, related the following story to me:

His parents, José de la Cruz and Dolores Gutierrez, lived near Las Colonias along the Pecos River. The Gutierrez' were among the many Hispano families who were friends of Billy the Kid. In his travels between Las Vegas and some of the towns along the Pecos, Billy would sometimes spend the night or stop to eat at the Gutierrez home.

One morning after breakfast as Billy was saddling his horse and preparing to leave after having spent the night as a guest, he asked to see Don José's weapons. Don José went inside the house and came back with an old percussion musket.

Billy looked at it and smiled, shaking his head in disbelief that such a weapon would even fire. "Este no sirve para nada," he said. ("This thing is good for nothing.") He took the old musket and smashed it against a fence post. He then reached in the scabbard and pulled out a .44-40 Winchester and handed it to Don José along with some cartridges and said, "Here, Don José. Out here you need good protection for your family."

Don Alberto related that the rifle Billy gave his father remained in their family a for long time but as the years passed, he did not know whatever became of the rifle.

ALFREDDITO AND THE OUTLAWS

Don Alfredo Chavez told the following story to me and my two boys December 29, 1976. Don Alfredo was born December 3, 1901 in Pinos Wells, New Mexico. His father was Don Herculano Chavez of Belen. Don Herculano died about 1923 at 76 years of age. Don Alfredo's mother, "Mama Marita", lived to be almost one hundred years old.

About 1914, young Alfredo was tending *carrneros* (rams) for his *padrino* (godfather), Don Pedro Lucero y Torres, when a man named Nieves and four other men robbed and murdered a merchant, Don Antonio Coury, in Santa Rosa. Nieves blamed Don Antonio for having sent him to prison when Don Antonio was a peace officer.

When Nieves got out of prison, he and the other men went to Don Antonio's store and when they knocked, he answered and told them the store was closed but that if they had money he would re-open for them. He did not recognize Nieves until too late. Nieves shot him dead. The five men then helped themselves to several rifles and pistols and headed southwest towards Torrance County. Torrance County Sheriff, Don Santiago Sena, and two deputies, Vidal Lopez and Luciano Sanchez, rode to the little house where young Chavez was staying and warned him about the men.

That evening after the sheriff and his deputies left, the outlaws came down from the mesa where they had been looking down on the house. Alfredo saw them coming and bolted the door and hid under a mattress. The men knocked on the door and when he didn't answer, one of the men began to plead with him to open the door.

"Little boy, we know you are in there! Open up! We won't harm you! We only want some food for we are very hungry!"

"I finally mustered enough courage and unbolted the door and let them in. They were a pitiful-looking bunch. I remember I made some sopapillas and fixed some meat for I had recently butchered a ewe. Nieves was very grateful and told me as he left, 'Muchachito, tu si eres hombre. Toma, te voy a regalar esta pistola porque tu si eres hombre! Y no leayas a decir a nadie que aqui estuvimos!'"

('Little boy, you are truly a man! Here! I am giving you this pistol as a gift because you are truly a man! And do not tell anyone we were here!')

"The following day the posse returned and Don Santiago asked me about the men.

'¡Aqui estuvieron esos hombres! Para donde se fueron?'

('Those men were here! Where did they go?')

"I don't know", I answered. "I have been out looking for my horse."

"After the sheriff and his men left, I got on my horse and rode to our house. I told my mother what had happened. To her, I told the truth."

"She then said, 'I don't want you out there by yourself anymore. Take José with you for company.'"

"Afterwards I learned that four of the men were later caught and hanged. The fifth man made it to the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks where he hopped a south-bound freight to El Paso and on to Mexico."

Young Alfredo later married the sheriff's beautiful daughter, The Señoría Doña Margarita Sena. After Don Alfredo told us the story, we went out to his car. He opened the trunk and showed us the gun Nieves gave him.

THE MONTAÑO FAMILY

This is the story of a family who struggled to make a living with their flocks of sheep during the closing days of the open range in what is now Quay County, New Mexico. It was told to me by my uncles Felipe and Nicolas Montaña, who as boys tended their father's flocks on the llanos. They knew every spring, water hole, and creek from the source of the Pajarito to the Texas line. The large flocks of sheep are gone. Like the herds of buffalo before them, they too have disappeared forever from the Llano country around the mountain called "El Cerro de Tucumcari".

The Montaña family came from White Oaks in Lincoln County where Don Victoriano Montaña was a miner. In the summer of 1894, he accepted an offer of *un atajo de borregas al partido* (a flock of sheep on shares) from his cousin, Don Florencio Martínez, and moved his family to an area southeast of present Tucumcari.

Montaña was no stranger to the sheep business. In 1860, as a youth of eighteen, he left his home near Rociada and in company with other men, drove a large flock of sheep to California. Montaña kept a ledger. One notation in his journal reads: "Rio de Los Baños, California, Mayo 15, 1864. Con esta fecha e vendido a el Señor José Penida, mi caballo moro con fierro del Rancho de San Luis Gonzayo." ("On this date, I sold to Señor José Penida, my mulberry-colored horse with the Rancho de San Luis Gonzayo brand.")

In California he met and married a very pretty girl from the Mexican state of Sonora. (My uncle Felipe told me she was a dancer.) Later, Montaña returned to his native New Mexico and made a living prospecting and mining. His wife, Calletana Varba, died in Las Vegas in 1882. He later married a girl from Rociada,

Antonia Garcia. They moved to White Oaks where three of their eleven children were born.

Felipe:

"My father started with 600 sheep and later we had up to 2300. We also had many goats. I was only a small boy but I remember we brought a few goats with us from White Oaks that my godfather had given me. They too multiplied into quite a large herd. Sometimes a goat would give birth to as many as three kids at one time. My brother Nicolas had charge of the herd of goats but sometimes we kept them together with the sheep for a fresh supply of milk.

"When we first came here, this *llanos* were nothing but mesquite. There were thousands of sheep grazing in this area and antelope were very numerous too. It was not uncommon to see herds of fifty or more. They were very tame. The lake east of Tucumcari had water the year around and the *pastores* (shepherds) brought their flocks to water there.

"But there were cattle ranches in this area also and the cowboys sometimes gave us a bad time. Sometimes they would lasso us and spin us around with their ropes just for sport. Other times they would be rougher. I remember when a ten year-old Mexican shepherd boy was hanged near Endee. For a long time the identity of his killers remained a mystery. A few years later I heard that an Anglo cowboy had confessed the killing of the lad. He told of having nightmares in which the boy appeared and of being always tormented by his conscience. I heard that the man finally went completely loco.

"I also remember the time when a furious hail storm killed many of our goats and scattered our sheep. My father and I were with our animals one summer day near El Ojo de Trujillo (Trujillo Springs). In the summer when it was very hot, this was a welcomed oasis of cool fresh water for thirsty shepherds and their flocks. Many travelers who knew its location also stopped at this spring.

"The storm began with a wind so strong that it blew our tent down. My father helped me set it up again just before the tempest

hit with its full force. There was a large herd of cows grazing nearby and the sheep and goats sought shelter among them. This caused the sheep to become separated and go in different directions. After the storm abated, we gathered our animals into a corral that was there and my father counted them.

"There were seventy sheep and thirty-five goats missing. We found most of the goats dead. Apparently they had drowned in the downpour or were trampled by the cows. I remained with the flock while my father searched the *médanos* (sandbars) around Narvaiz, present day Nara Visa, for many days without success. Afterwards we found many carcasses scattered throughout the *llanos* and *médanos*. The coyotes had had better luck at finding our sheep. I remember that wild plums were very abundant in the area around the sandbars.

"My uncle Bacilio had a rancho at a place called Los Barriales near present day Norton. There, near a spring below some *cerritos* (small buttes) were the remains of an old prairie schooner. *Los Viejitos* (the old ones) used to say that many years before, Indians had attacked and killed some immigrants there.

"In those days it was not unusual to see a ten year-old boy tending hundreds of sheep by himself. My brothers and I were no exceptions. We often remained away from the house for weeks at a time. We used *burros* (donkeys) to transport our food, water, and camp gear. I remember a grateful little donkey that my father had trained very well. He carried our drinking water in two small wooden barrels tied to a pack saddle. My father trained the little *burrito* to lay down when someone would rake hold of one of its front shanks. This made it easier for us boys to hang the water barrels on the pack saddle. This was the way we hauled water to our sheep camps.

"We also carried plenty of *carne seca* (jerky) with us. We used a stone to pound the dried meat thus making it even more palatable. Ewes too old to breed sold for a dollar then but my father never sold ours. Instead, we butchered them and dried the meat. We always had an ample supply that would last us all winter. We youngsters were pretty good at eating *carne seca*.

Vecinos y Escuela (Neighbors and School)

"Our first Hispano neighbors were Don Segundo Marquez and his wife Doña Libertita. Other neighbors were Don José Anaya and the Martinez family, Don Victoriano and his wife, Doña Albinita, who lived at El Rincon Bonito.* Don Victoriano also had some houses at a place called La Placita, a little below Norton.

*Note: Don Victoriano Martinez died in March, 1924 at the age of ninety-five. In his younger days Don Victoriano was a buffalo hunter and for many years prior to the coming of the railroad to New Mexico, he also freighted between Santa Fe and Missouri. His wife, Doña Albinita Montoya de Martinez, died in 1935. (Interview with Florencio "Shorty" Martinez, Glenrio, New Mexico, March 19, 1976.)

"About 1904, school was held in La Placita at the home of Don Guadalupe Rival. A man named Tomas Rivera was the School-master that year. Some of the family names I remember were the Gomez', the Rivals', and the Britos'. The children of the empleados of Don Polinario Vigil, a *patron* who had thousands of sheep in that area, were also among those who attended school that year.

"In those days, school was also held in a one-room school-house at Revuelto. Revuelto, situated on Revuelto Creek between present-day Tucumcari and San Jon, consisted of a combination general store and post office, a small schoolhouse, a chapel, and a few houses occupied by Don Florencio Martinez, the Postmaster, and the families of his empleados.

"Each term lasted only about two months. Our teacher there was Don Patricio Sanchez, Don Florencio's son-in-law. Classes were all taught in Spanish. It was difficult to learn because the older children distracted the younger ones when they were asked to read out loud.

"I could recite the entire alphabet from memory without difficulty but when someone would point to a letter in the middle of the alphabet, I had difficulty identifying it. They had the alphabet written on a piece of cardboard for me and I soon wore holes in the cardboard from pointing at each letter with my finger.

"But I did not learn as much at that little school as I did from

my father. The school where my father taught us was located out on the llanos where we were tending sheep. My father could read and write very well. He even spoke French which he had learned from his mother. At first I was very stubborn and slow at learning. There were times when the "Professor's" patience wore pretty thin. However, his patience paid off and I learned to read and write very well.

The Trip To Hereford:

"One year Don Casimiro Romero, a very prominent man who lived at El Medano, gathered together a large number of men for the purpose of transporting wool to a new market in Hereford, Texas. Previously, we had taken our wool to Las Vegas. His son, who had received his education in St. Louis, had connections with a buyer who had made arrangements to receive the wool at Hereford at thirteen cents a pound.*

* Note: Wool was selling for ten cents a pound in Las Vegas. *La Voz Del Pueblo*, June 15, 1895.

"My father had to borrow an extra wagon and we loaded our wool on it and two other wagons. Each wagon carried thirteen or fourteen sacks each weighing about 200 pounds. I was very proud because my father assigned me to drive the lighter of the three wagons.

"There were many men and wagons gathered at the place where we started. Others joined us along the way until the train consisted of about seventy wagons. We traveled from Revuelto and climbed the *ceja* (brow of the plains) at a place where later the Rock Island Railroad climbed onto the *Llano*. This was one of the few places then where loaded wagons could ascend the bluffs of the Llano Estacado. In those days there was a spring of cool water at the base of the gap. There were many wild ponies near that place but no one ever bothered with them as they were too wild and useless besides.

"After we climbed the *ceja* onto the *Llano*, we met Don Manuel Labadie. Don Manuel was a heavy-set man with a very light complexion. He looked like an *Americano*. Don Manuel and his wife, Doña Vidalita Cordova de Labadie, had a ranch near

Endee. He had the mail run between La Plata (later Hereford) and Liberty. He carried the mail in a small buggy pulled by two mules. I remember he also carried two pistols. Meeting him was a joyous occasion and he and some of the men of the train exchanged vibrant embraces. Don Manuel and my father were very good friends.

"When we got to Hereford we camped near a small arroyo. We remained there a few days until railroad cars were made available to receive the wool."

"There was an Indian boy who was of the household of Señor Romero. Like myself, he had never seen a train before. The first night there, around midnight, a passing train roared by and its light illuminated our entire camp. It terrified him so badly he grabbed his sarapé and took off into the night.

"Very early next morning, some old men gathered around a fire drinking coffee, saw someone up on a rise walking towards the camp. 'Ayí viene uno a pie', ('Yonder comes someone on foot'), they said. It was the Indian boy wrapped in his sarapé. I don't know how far he ran that night.

"The Holdup At Revuelto And The Spikes Gang."

Told to me by my uncle Nicolas Montañó.

"Revuelto was not far from Ojo Del Llano where there was another *capilla* (chapel). Don Florencio Martinez operated the general store and post office at Revuelto. He was very helpful to everyone. He extended credit to people the year around and loaned shepraisers money to pay their *pastores* (shepherds). Pastores were paid fifteen dollars a month. Cooks in the sheep camps received eighteen dollars and *trasmquiladores* (shearers) received two and a half cents per head.

"I was about seven years old and going to school for the first time. My father sent me and my brother Ambrosio to school in Revuelto and we were boarding at our cousin Francisco Barreras who lived about a half mile from town. We were doing our chores late one afternoon when seven men rode past the house headed towards town. These were no ordinary cowboys for they were heavily armed. I noticed they were carrying the new 'treinta-

treintas' (30-30 Winchester) and some were wearing two pistols. But the most unusual thing about those men was their appearance; they were gringos and they had their faces blackened with soot.

"The story later told was that the seven 'Black' riders created quite a bit of excitement when they rode into town at sundown for it was not every day that Negroes were seen in this part of the country. They dismounted and left their horses in a corral about a hundred yards from the store. As they walked towards the store, four or five men saw them and excitingly invited one another to the store to take a closer look at the 'black men' who had just ridden into town.

"¡Vamos a ver a los Negros tratar!" ("Let's go see the Blacks do their trading!")

"As the curiosity seekers filed into the store, they were greeted by one of the bandits with a 30-30 carbine. They were shoved into a corner and made to empty their pockets. Each man had at least a dollar in his pocket for that very day Don Florencio had advanced each man one dollar to pay his *capitacion*. The *capitacion* was a per-capita fee collected and used to pay the Schoolmaster.

"The thieves helped themselves to every box of ammunition in the store and stuffed it into gunny sacks. They also took other things they liked. One of them forced Don Florencio to open a small steel box where the post office money was kept. When the small steel box where the post office money was kept. When the outlaws had everything they wanted, they marched the townsmen to the corral where one of the outlaws tipped his hat and thanked Don Florencio with 'Muchas gracias'.

"They then mounted their horses and galloped out of town towards the ranch of a man named McAdams where it was said they kept a posta or relay of horses. McAdams was not a member of the outlaw band but was apparently a very good friend of theirs.

"The following day there was talk of forming a posse for the purpose of going after the outlaws but Don Patricio Sanchez, who had been asked to lead the posse, spoke out against doing so. He pointed out that the outlaws were well armed and that the townspeople had only a few old rifles and pistols and that they were certainly no match for the outlaws. 'I will not lead anyone to a slaughter', he told them.

"McAdams was known to the Spanish-speaking people as 'El Machoarahué'. One day Don José Ynez Duran came to our house looking for my father:

"¿Dónde esta mi primo Victoriano con las borregas?" ("Where is my cousin Victoriano with the sheep?") he asked my mother.

"Aya esta arriba de los barrancos en El Revuelto." ("He's up above the banks of The Revuelto.")

"¿Que no lo han corrido de allí?" ("Haven't they run him off from there?")

"¡No se!" Quien corre de allí?" ("I don't know! Who is running off people away from there?")

"¡El Machoarahué! Ese no deja entrar a nadie allí." ("El Machoarahué! He doesn't let anyone in there.")

"McAdams didn't like Mexicans and although that entire part of the country was open range, he would not allow the Hispano *pastores* to venture near what he considered his range. Many of the *pastores* were afraid of him.

"One day my father and one of my brothers, Felipe, were knocking down *cañillos* (cockleburrs) not far from our house. We cleared the patches of *cañillos* because they clinged to the sheep's wool."

"McAdams, armed with two pistols and a Winchester, rode up to where my father was working and pushed his horse against my father knocking him to the ground. My father quickly recovered and with his staff of mesquite wood, struck a blow to the neck of McAdams' horse. The blow knocked the horse to the ground head first. McAdams also tumbled to the ground, his hands still clutching the reins.

"My frightened brother ran to the house and told my mother that McAdams had probably killed my father. My mother took a pistol and she and my brother ran to where the incident had taken place, expecting to find my father shot. When they got there, McAdams was gone. My father was in the shade of a mesquite bush reading *La Voz Del Pueblo*, a Spanish language newspaper published in Las Vegas. McAdams continued to dislike my father after that but he respected him also.

"It was believed that the outlaws who robbed Don Florencio's

general mercantile store and post office were the same ones who had assaulted and robbed several other places including Montoya, Ojo Del Llano, and Endee. At Rosebud, the Postmaster had been killed. This gang was known as Los Espaiques or the Spikes gang. They had their headquarters up on the Mesa Redonda area and their main business was cattle rustling. They never bothered the *pastores*.

"One of our Anglo neighbors, El Señor Nance, was later deputized and given orders to capture or kill the Spikes. He and his wife and children lived in a *coyé* (dugout) down by the creek below the Marquez place. Señor Nance was a tall lanky man. He wore two pistols with the butts facing forward. También era un *riflero del diassque*. (He was also one hell of a rifleman.)

"It was told that Señor Nance rid the county of the Spikes by luring them into a trap. He baited the trap with a small herd of cows being slowly driven through the open country south of Tucumcari Mountain by what appeared to be two old men in a covered spring wagon. Nance and three other good riflemen were hidden inside the wagon.

"The Spikes had a lookout posted up on a mesa and no doubt watched as the wagon and small herd appeared in the distance. Towards late afternoon, the two men made it appear as if they had stopped to rest at the mouth of one of the canyons.

"When the outlaws were satisfied that the small herd would be an easy mark, three men rode in to take it. Nance and his men opened up and two of the outlaws were instantly killed. The third, realizing they had run into a trap, whirled his horse around and made a run for it. As he sped away, a rifle bullet tore through the cante of his saddle partially severing his genital glands.

"Though painfully wounded, he made it to the rancho of Don Onofre Apodaca. He offered the old man a twenty dollar gold piece for his help. Don Onofre hitched up a buggy and carried the wounded man to the home of one of the gang's relatives who in turn transported him to Hereford, Texas.

"It was said the young man lived and later became a very prominent man in the community around Lubbock. Señor Nance died shortly thereafter. One day, while looking after his cows, he

stopped at El Ojo de Trujillo. When he reached down to get a drink of water, one of his pistols slipped from his holster, struck a rock, and discharged. the bullet struck Señor Nance in the forehead killing him instantly. Pero quien sabe. (But who really knows.)

(Note:) The July, 1900 census shows a Louis Nance, age 33, his wife, Lizzie, age 25, and two sons and daughters who lived in Precinct 13, Endee. Place of birth for Mr. and Mrs. Nance was Texas.

Another gang of outlaws that operated in what is now Quay County was that of Thomas E. "Blackjack" Ketchum. His gang robbed and killed a merchant named Herzstein in Liberty and another man near there in 1897. The gang had also committed crimes in other parts of the state. Ketchum later confessed that he, his brother, Sam, "Bronco Bill" Walters, and three other men, had robbed the U. S. Mails at Stein's Pass west of Lordsburg.¹

Bronco Bill shot it out in the streets of Deming with two deputies named Phillips and Peters when they tried to arrest him. Though wounded, Bronco Bill managed to get on his horse and escape.²

Blackjack was wounded in the arm during a train robbery near Folsom in early 1899. His brother Sam died July 24, 1899 after being wounded and captured during an encounter with lawmen near Cimarron.³ Blackjack was also captured and was later tried in Clayton. On February 25, 1901, he was sentenced to hang.

On Friday morning April 26, 1901, Blackjack was hanged in Clayton. He was guarded the previous night by twenty-six deputies. The morning of the execution, Ketchum enjoyed a hardy breakfast. He took a bath and put on a new suit. Upon his attorney's departure, Ketchum told him, "Tell Harrington (the train conductor who wounded him in the arm), I'll be waiting for him in hell." Ketchum asked to be buried face down. He also asked Sheriff Salome Garcia to carry out the execution promptly so he could "get to hell in time for lunch".⁴

1 *El Independiente*, May 2, 1901.

2 *El Nuevo Mexicano*, April 11, 1896.
3 *La Voz Del Pueblo*, July 29, 1899.
4 *El Independiente*, May 2, 1901

Holdups and cattle thefts did not end in the area with the breaking up of these gangs. On August 27, 1904, there was a front page story in *La Voz Del Pueblo* about a train robbery near Logan. Rock Island's train number four, The Golden State Limited, was held up and robbed on Saturday August 6, 1904. Alex Street, a well known lawman, was among the posse sent out to try and track down the outlaws.

When the Rock Island reached the area just north of Tucumcari Mountain in 1901, the merchants at Liberty dismantled their buildings and moved their stocks of merchandise to the site of present Tucumcari. At first, the merchants conducted their businesses out of tents and hastily constructed shacks.

With the arrival of the railroad, rough and unruly characters also drifted into the area among the good folks. Drinking and gambling were the chief entertainment for the hard-working construction gangs and soon fist fights and gun play were so common, the place became known as Six-Shooter Siding.

This name did not sit well with Rock Island Railroad officials who hoped to lure homesteaders and businesses to the area served by their railroad. When it was decided that a permanent station be built there, the Chief Engineer suggested they give the town the name of the mountain and they called it Tucumcari.

NICOLAS:

"I remember the time I got to go into town with my father for supplies. There was a big wagon yard in Tucumcari in those days and there my father got together with some of his good friends, Don Polinario Vigil, Don Higinio Folks, Don Pablo Medina, another man named Muniz, and Don Andres Dominguez. Don Andres lived at a place that was then called El Anaya in the vicinity of present House.

"My father had credit at the store that was owned by the Goldenbergs. He told me to get whatever food I wanted there and

to get feed for the horses. I spent the next two or three days caring for the horses and treating myself with good things to eat from the store while my father and his friends went on a *parranda* (drinking spree). They went from one *canina* (saloon) to another. When they had had enough, we hitched up the teams and loaded the wagons with provisions and supplies.

"We left town as the sun was going down. I remember Don Andres had a great big .45 calibre revolver that he always carried with him. That night as we were traveling, a big full moon appeared and he took several shots at it. Don Polinario had fifteen gallons of whiskey in his wagon and everyone had a good time. We traveled all night and arrived home at daybreak. From there the men continued their different directions.

"We lived east of Norton, that was before it was called that. About 1907 or 1908, an American named Michael Norton established a store and post office there. I sold, or rather, traded *zaleas* (sheepskins) to Mr. Norton for candy, tobacco, and ammunition for a .22 rifle my father bought me when I was ten years old. Twenty-two shorts were only ten cents a box then and longs were fifteen cents.

"The sheepskins I traded to Mr. Norton were mostly from dead sheep I found while tending our goats. These were sheep left out on the llanos where they died. I would skin them, let the hides dry, and when I had a few collected, I would leave the goats and take the *zaleas* to Mr. Norton's. I always had plenty of shells, candy, and tobacco.

The Montaña family tended their flocks of sheep in the Tucumcari area until grazing land became scarce due to the influx of homesteaders. In 1911, they moved to La Pintada, an area west of Santa Rosa. My uncles Felipe and Nicolas were living at La Pintada when they were drafted into military service on September 21, 1917. Both saw action in France. Uncle Felipe served in the 89th Infantry Division. "Uncle Nick", as we called my uncle Nicolas, fought alongside eighteen fellow New Mexicans in Company "F", 30th Infantry Regiment of the Third Division.

The following story was told to me by three former members of Company "F", my uncle Nicolas Montaña, Don José Amable Perea, and Don Jacobo Salazar:

THE BOYS OF COMPANY "F"

Nicolas:

"After spending about a month in Ft. Riley, Kansas, I was among the men who were transferred to the 40th Division at Camp Kearney, California where we spent a few months. There were many Nuevo Mexicanos there and also many men from New York. Several of those from New York told me they had never held a rifle or a pistol in their hands until they had been inducted into the army.

"A sergeant told us on one occasion, 'I am going to teach you men how to use this rifle.' 'He may teach me how to have a baby,' I told my Spanish-speaking friends, 'but he is not going to teach me how to use a rifle.'"

"Me toco pelear de puro bruto. (I got to fight out of pure stupidity.) While at Camp Kearney, there came a call for fifty volunteers for duty in France. In our company there were a couple of New Mexican *políticos*. Isidro Ortiz and Felipe Sanchez. They each gave us Nuevo Mexicanos an eloquent speech: 'It is an honor to serve our nation. When we return to our respective countries, the best office jobs will belong to those who will have fought for their country.'

"I told my companions, 'Que diablos voy hacer yo en trabajo de oficina cuando apenas se leer y escribir!' ('What the devil am I going to do in an office when I can barely read and write!')

"But I volunteered and was among the fifty New Mexicans and others who were sent to France. Among those who volunteered with me were Jacobo Salazar from Puerto de Luna, a young man named Lovato from Ft. Sumner, Daniel Vigil, Roberto Sanchez, Pedro Zamora, José Perea, Carlos Sena, José Sandoval from Anton Chico or Dila and José Garcia y Baca from Albuquerque. Garcia y Baca was called 'Wye Baca' by the Anglos. He, Jose Sandoval, and Jacobo Salazar were among those who were wounded.

"It took us thirteen days to cross the ocean. I pulled guard duty almost every night. We arrived in France on July 12, 1918. They took us by train almost to where the fighting was at Chateau-Thierry. All of us were assigned to the Third Division. Eighteen or nineteen of us went to Company "F", 30th Infantry Regiment." My uncle Nicolas never forgot the name of the brave Company Commander, Captain John Carrus, who led the company through many encounters with the Germans.

"He once told me after the war ended, 'Montaño, if you would have had at least a high school education, you would have been commissioned.' "

Uncle Nick recalled the fight in which his friend "Wye Baca" was badly wounded by machine gun fire. "Do you know that man did not complain once! We were running across an open field when a German machine gun opened up on us. Most of us hit the dirt in time but Baca got hit in both legs by the first burst. That machine gun practically pulverized both his legs."

"After we silenced the gun, José Sandoval and I crawled over to him. We found him a bloody mess but calmly tying a tourniquet to one of his legs. He turned to us and in a scolding voice said, '¡Ah, cobardes, que se cain! A ustedes nos les hizo nada pero miren nomas a mí! Pero si me levantan de aquí, ya yo no mori en esta guerra.'

('Cowards, who fall! They didn't do anything to you but look at me! But if you help me up from here, I know I will not have died in this war.')

"I saw men hit in a finger and do more crying and that man didn't even groan. Later when we were in Germany, we received a letter from him. He told us he had lost both legs but that he would

soon be going home to Albuquerque. *

"Jacobo Salazar was hit in the knee. It happened just before the war ended. One day many years later during the time of the Second World War, I walked into a bar in Tucumcari and there was Jacobo.

"It's a good thing you are here', he said. 'These fellows here wanted to beat me up because we had been discussing the war and I told them I had been a soldier once and had been wounded in France. They called me a liar and the fight was about to begin when you walked in.' "

"I told Jacobo he was just wasting his time with those *babosos* (drivelings) and that all he could expect from them was a beating for their kind are very brave in a bar. 'Aquí si son muy valientes', I told him.

"We were in the Meuse-Argonne when the war ended. From there we made a long march to Munster-Mayfield in Germany for occupation duty. When we arrived there we were immediately deloused.

"The German people treated us better than the French did. All the French wanted was our money. I was billeted in the house of an elderly German couple who treated me like a son. I would help the old man milk the cows. I gave him his haircuts and even shaved him.

"We arrived back in the States on August 23, 1919 and were put on a train to Ft. Bliss where I and the others with me were discharged on September 3, 1919. They gave each of us sixty dollars mustering out pay. We crossed over into Juarez and got drunk. * *GARCIA LATER DIED OF HIS WOUNDS, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CHAPTER 3 IS NAMED FOR HIM IN ALBUQUERQUE.*

DON JOSÉ A. PEREA

The lean, frail-looking old gentleman was standing in front of Walgreen's in downtown Albuquerque one cold morning, February 15, 1977. His faded suit coat, at least two sizes too large, was drawn tight against the cold. His headgear consisted of a faded purple and white World War I Veterans organization cap. I walked over to him and greeted him in Spanish, "Buenos dias

le de Dios." I then introduced myself and he told me his name was José Perea. I pointed to his cap and remarked that my father had one like it and that he had served in France. Don José said he too had served in France with Company "F", 30th Infantry, Third Division.

I remembered that that was the same unit my uncle Nicolas Montaña had served with. The old man's eyes lit up at the mention of my uncle's name.

"¡Valgame Dios! I remember him well! Is he still living?" I replied that he was well and he now lived in Tucumcari. Don José and I became good friends and we visited many times in my home and in his in northwest Albuquerque.

Don José Perea was born August 28, 1890 in Torreón, New Mexico. His parents were Don Isidro Perea and Doña Maria Vallejos de Perea. He and a friend, Pedro Zamora, also from Torreón, voluntarily enlisted in the Army at Estancia on his twenty-seventh birthday. Zamora was twenty-three.

From Estancia they went to Ft. Bliss and then to Ft. Riley. After some training at Ft. Riley, they were sent to Camp Kearney, California near San Diego and assigned to the 40th Division. He and Zamora were among the approximately thirty-six New Mexicans who volunteered for combat duty in France. All were assigned to the Third Regular Army Division. Half of these men went to Company "F", 30th Infantry, then involved in heavy fighting in the Chateau-Thierry sector.

It was at Chateau-Thierry where this group of Nuevo Mexicanos received their baptism of fire. According to military records, the Third Division succeeded in stopping the German attacks of July 15th-18th, the last of the enemy offenses. Its conduct on that occasion earned for it the title, "Rock of the Marne Division". The Third was never stationed in a quiet sector, but was 86 days in active sectors, more than any other division with the exception of the First.

Don José participated in three battles including Chateau-Thierry, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne. Like my uncle Nicolas, he still remembered the names of many of the men in his company. He also remembered Captain Catus, First Sergeant DeMay, and

another sergeant named Bassie.

Many years later on April 24, 1954, a dinner honoring Captain Catus was held at the Army and Navy Club in Washington. Don José still had the invitation but he was unable to attend the event.

After the Armistice, his unit was assigned occupation duty in Germany. He remembered they walked all the way and crossed the German border on November 17th. Don José and my uncle were discharged the same day in Ft. Bliss. He returned to Torrance County where he later served as a deputy sheriff.

During World War I, there was a popular New Mexican ballad about a soldier who had gone off to war during the Spanish-American War. The last verse of the ballad was a prayer.

Madre mia de Guadalupe,
Prestame vida total,
Para volver a mi tierra,
Y a Santa Fe, Capital.

Mother (Virgin) of Guadalupe,
Grant me total life, I pray,
That I may return to my land,
And its Capital, Santa Fe.

Don José Amable Perea passed away in Santa Fe in January, 1980.

DON JACOBLO SALAZAR

The third former member of Company "F" I had the honor of knowing was Don Jacobo Salazar. In fact, he and my mother were first cousins. I interviewed him in Santa Rosa where he was living in 1980. He too was humble and soft spoken but proud that he had served his country. He showed me his Discharge Certificate. It showed that he had participated in three battle campaigns, and that he had a "gunshot wound in right leg". It showed that he was twenty one when inducted and that his occupation was "Farmer" with place of birth, Puerto de Luna.

"Actually I was only nineteen. I had lied about my age earlier

when I applied for a homestead.”

He too remembered that almost immediately upon arriving in France, he and his *compañeros* were thrown into combat.

“We got off the train, walked a bit and were already under fire when we crossed a river in launches. I always stuck very close to Nicolas. We were in the same squad. The day I got hit, Captain Cattus was also wounded in the hand. I remember he told the medics he wanted to get back to the company. I was in a hospital in France when the war ended.

VAMONOS CON PANCHO VILLA

PRELUDE "FELIX"

Don ~~Felix~~ Rodriguez was one of the most interesting persons I have ever known. He was a man whose life story could have been made into a movie. Though he lived in the Tucumcari area for many years, very few people really knew very much about him.

He had no family there. I first met him in December of 1957. The Spanish he spoke was not “New Mexico” Spanish and I assumed he was one of many Mexican nationals who had come to Tucumcari to work for the railroad after the Mexican Revolution. I became re-acquainted with Don Felix in the mid 1970s. At the time he was a resident at the Van Ark Nursing Home.

Every time I visited with him, I would learn more about him. He spoke beautiful Spanish. Sometimes I would make notes of stories he told of his youth and especially of his experiences during the Mexican Revolution. I also taped some of the stories he told me.

I visited with him many times. He was always in a cheerful mood and always had a pleasant smile. On Wednesday April 25, 1979, I took my tape recorder and went to visit with him. He asked me to sit on a chair and he sat on his bed. I asked him politely, “¿Como ha estado, Don Felix?” (How have you been, Don Felix?)

“Sabe que me he sentido triste estos ultimos dias.”, he said. “I have been feeling sad these last few days.”

His response was different from his usual answer, “Bien, bien, gracias á Dios.” “Fine, fine, thanks to God.”

I then quickly changed the conversation and asked him, “Was Francisco Madero a good man, Don Felix?”
The mention of Madero’s name revived him. It was almost as

if I had spoken a holy name for he quickly but very piously removed his hat. Don Felix would always remove his hat and place it over his heart whenever he mentioned the name of Jesus Christ or Pancho Villa.

"El y mi General Villa siempre fueron por el pobre." ("He and my General Villa were always for the poor.")

I had succeeded in opening the door to the past again for Don Felix and he immediately went on to talk about one of his favorite and most esteemed persons, Francisco "Pancho" Villa whom he referred to almost reverently as "Mi General".

"Villa dijo que el no ansiaba el poder de la silla presidencial; lo que deseaba era quitar el yugo tirano que tenia toda clase de pobre."

"Villa said he had no desire for the power of the presidential seat; his desire was to remove the yoke of tyranny from all the poor."

"Mi General was not an educated man but it was amazing the things he could retain in his memory. That man could look at you and read your very thoughts."

Don Felix related his adventures during the revolution and with precision recalled the names of people and places. He told of being wounded at a place called Icamole. It was a flesh wound in his right thigh. He recalled that his horse was killed that day.

"Hera un caballo prieto." ("It was a black horse.")

During the war, three horses were killed from under him.

"En Parral llore por mi caballo. Se llamava 'Relampago'."

Hera colorado con un lucero en la frente. Era un excelente y hermoso animal. Ese caballo me lo envidiaban hasta los oficiales."

"In Parral, I cried for my horse. His name was 'Flash'. He was red and had a white star on his forehead. He was an excellent and beautiful animal. Even the officers were envious of that horse."

"The cavalry soldier referred to his horse as 'el gancho' or 'el cuaco'. I was in the cavalry but did fight as an infantryman too.

The cavalry's job was to back the infantry. I still get goose pimples when I think of those times. With the butts of our rifles we would dig out and pile dirt in front of us to deflect the bullets.

Our bayonets were fixed as protection against cavalry.

"During the battle of Zacatecas, one of the bloodiest of the revolution, I was one of the soldiers reported killed in the action.

After the fighting, I and a friend named Ramon Saraté went to search for Saraté's wife. She was among the many camp followers so common in those days. We were absent at roll call. When we re-joined our unit, we discovered that a cross had been marked after our names on the roster. The cross meant that we were dead or missing.

Don Felix recalled that everyone knew things were going to get rough around Zacatecas. He echoed the words shouted by one of the officers just before the fight, "¡Ahora si, muchachos, el que murio, murio, y el que vivio, vivio!"

"Now then, boys, he who will die, will die, and he who will live, will live!"

"The streets of Zacatecas were covered with the dead. They were literally rivers of blood. The sides of buildings and walls were plastered with men's blood and brains, the results of shot-shells used by federal troops furnished them by the Germans.

"Moving about meant jumping and often tripping over the dead. After Zacatecas was taken, we were given orders to pile the dead, both men and horses and burn them. Their stench was unbearable."

Don Felix mentioned a couple of hills around Zacatecas, El Cerro De La Bufa and El Cerro Del Grillo. He also mentioned another Mexican revolutionary general, El General Felipe Angeles. Don Felix recited in song a few verses of a *corrido* (ballad) written about General Angeles.

"En San Pedro De Las Colonias tambien estuvo duro." "In San Pedro De Las Colonias we had it very bad also. A lad named Eduardo Najera was shot in the chest. When we got to him he was stuffing fistfulls of sand in the hole in his chest. "¡Esos son hombres!", someone shouted. We picked him up and he moaned in pain. We took him to where the dead and wounded were being gathered and left him there.

I asked Don Felix, "So the poor lad died there, eh?"
"Who? Eduardo? No! About two weeks later I saw him in

Torreón, eating watermelon!"

One day I asked Don Felix if he had personally known Pancho Villa.

"¡Valgame Dios, seguro que sí!"

"One morning I and one of my friends, Pancho Avila, woke up with big hangovers. We had spent all our money and did not have anything left with which to buy a drink to cure our hangovers. We were walking down a street when we saw 'El Jefe' himself walking towards us. We stood very straight and saluted, 'Buenas Dias, mi General!' He must have sensed our miserable condition.

"¡Hijos! ¿Que se les ofrece?' (My sons! What can I do for you?')

"I stood speechless but Pancho answered ashamedly, 'Haber si nos presta un Peso para la cruda.' ('Will you lend us a Peso with which to cure our hangover?')

"¡Aqui está!, he said. He gave each of us two Pesos. 'Pero otra vez tomen con moderación. Aqui estamos todavía entre el enemigo.' ('Here! But next time you should drink with moderation. We are still among the enemy in this place.')

Don Felix had previously mentioned about almost being executed by a firing squad during the revolution. One day I asked him to tell me about it. His tone of voice changed. He pointed a finger at me in a warning manner and said, "¡Mucho cuidado con una acusación falsa!" ("Be very careful with a false accusation! I am more afraid of a false accusation than of having to answer for something I have actually done!")

"In Santa Rosalia Camargo, I fell for a girl named Rafaela Moreno. It was the custom there for people and especially for young lovers, to gather in the Plaza on Thursday nights for 'Noche de Serenata' (Serenade Night).

"When I saw her earlier that day, she asked if I would be there or if I had duty that night. I told her I had duty. That night I finished my duties early and I hurried into town. I saw her at the serenata with another man. She did not see me. When the serenade ended I left and waited outside her house. After a while, I saw her coming alone. She was very surprised to see me.

"¡Que bonito lo haces, Rafaela!' ('Very nicely done, Rafaela!', I told her."

"She became very angry and the next thing she did, she disarranged her hairdo and then tore her dress to shreds and ran screaming into her house.

"The following morning, her mother went to Colonel Eduardo Martinez with a big story and I was arrested and jailed. But I also had a very good friend, a very brave woman from the state of Vera Cruz who also fought in the revolution. She was highly respected by everyone who knew her. Her name was Pabla Morales. Pabla would take food to me while I was in jail although most of the time I was too depressed to eat. But better than that, she went to General Rosalio Hernandez and made intercession for me.

"Then one day I was told that the decree of execution had been issued. That night, around midnight, I was taken from my cell and marched to the cemetery outside of town. They stood me in front of an adobe wall and the firing squad was readied.

"Then came a rider at a dead run from the direction of the *cuartel* or headquarters barracks and shouted, 'Who is in charge of this detail?'

"I am!' answered the sergeant, 'What is the matter?'

"I have a paper for you from headquarters!"

"The sergeant took the paper from the messenger and read it by lantern light. He then scribbled his signature on it and returned it to the messenger. The sergeant barked an order to the squad and I was marched back to my cell. My thoughts were that my execution had been postponed until daylight so that the townspeople could witness it.

"Esa mañana oyi que sono el clarin 'La Diana'." ("Early in the

morning I heard the trumpet sound 'Reveille'.")

"When they brought me out of the cell, the troops were all lined up in morning formation. Everyone was stiff at attention and all was quiet as I was led through the ranks towards the center of the parade field.

"Then I saw El Coronel Eduardo Martinez as he stood at attention. The rays of the early morning sun were reflecting off the

sword at his side. The guards led me towards the man and we stopped a few feet in front of him; I saluted.

“¿Como le va, Rodriguez? ¡Sabra usted que a alcansado indulto por el General Rosalio Hernandez! Pero tambien le digo que ande en punta de pie, mi pollito, pòque en el menos resbalon, me la va a pagar. Tenia pensado tenerlo en carcel aqui un mes, pero ahora que rompa fila la tropa, sale usted tambien!”

“How are you, Rodriguez?, he said. Before I had time to answer, he continued, ‘You have received a pardon from General Rosalio Hernandez! But I tell you this also my lad; you better tread lightly, because the slightest slip you make, you will pay for it! I had thought about keeping you here in jail for a month, however, when the troops are dismissed, fall out with them!’”

“When the order to dismiss was given, the soldiers yelled out a tremendous shout of joy and threw their hats into the air! The First Sergeant, Margarito Hernandez, came over to me and said, ‘Let’s go get some breakfast!’ On the way to breakfast, we passed a cantina and he said, ‘Let’ get a drink!’”

“Cuando entramos a la cantina, el cantinero le pregunto al sargento, ‘¿Que paso con el decreto? ¿Ya paso la ejecucion?’”

“When we entered the cantina, the bartender asked the First Sergeant, ‘What about the decree? Has the execution already been carried out?’”

“The First Sergeant put his arm around my shoulder and said, ‘Aqui lo tiene al frente el que iba ser fusilado!’” (‘Here before you is the one who was to have been shot!’)”

“The bartender excitedly came from around the counter and embraced me.”

“¡Bendito sea Dios!, he said. Ha nacido usted de nuevo!’ (‘Bless God!, he said. ‘you have been born anew!’)” ‘Let’s have a drink!’”

“Asi es que me escape de la ‘huesudia’ en Santa Rosalia.”
 (“And so I escaped the ‘Boney Old Lady’ (Death) in Santa Rosalia.”

“Years later, I ran into a man who had known Colonel Martinez. He told me that after the war, Martinez was shot and killed in a dispute with a rancher.”

Yes, I believe Don Felix’s life story could have been excellent material for a movie. From the very beginning, he led a most unusual life. He never knew his father and his mother abandoned him. Later, he was conscripted into military service at a very early age in a land where he was but a sojourner. He was also to serve voluntarily in a struggle against oppression and tyranny in another country also not his own.

Don Felix was born in Chalchuapa, El Salvador. His father, Denerio Rodriguez died before Don Felix was born. His mother, Dominga Guevara, left him with his godparents when he was four years old. He never saw her again.

When he was about eleven years old, his godparents, Jesús Toledo and Delmira Ortiz de Toledo, went to live in neighboring Guatemala. Young Felix found a job in a hotel owned by an Italian lady.

“One day a sergeant and five soldiers came to the hotel. I was sweeping the floor. The sergeant came over to me and asked in a very authoritative manner, ‘¿Que es su nombre?’

(‘What is your name?’) ‘¡Felix Rodriguez! Soy Salvadoreño. (‘I am Salvadoran.’)

“¿Tiene usted boleta de fondo? ¿Su cedula?’ (Do you have papers?’ Your identity card?’)

“No tengo ni de mi tierra mucho menos de aqui.” (‘I haven’t

papers from my own country much less from this one.’)
“‘Take him away!’, the sergeant ordered. Matea, the kitchen maid, pleaded with the sergeant telling him I was but a child. I was taken to the *cuartel* and locked up in the guardhouse.”

Don Felix related that the Italian lady also went to see about his release later but they refused to release him. He was later taken to a camp where he received only a smattering of military training. Being only about thirteen or fourteen years old and of small stature, he was used as a runner delivering mail and military dispatches on foot between two towns on the coast. He remembered that one of the towns was named Champenco.

“I would run as fast as I could along the beach. I was always terrified because the nearby jungle was full of panthers, snakes, and all sorts of other wild beasts.”

A few months later he deserted and began walking, following some railroad tracks towards his native El Salvador. Somewhere along the way, he met a man who worked at a train station. The man was curious about young Felix's rag-tag military uniform. Felix told the man the truth about his situation.

The man provided him with food and a change of clothes. He advised him to stay away from the railroad. The man also advised him to go to the port of Izatapa where he had heard they were recruiting people to go work in Mexico.

"The man was right. There were many people gathered there at the port of Izatapa. A ship from Panama was being loaded with workers bound for Mexico. Individuals and even entire families were being recruited. I was 'taken under the wing' by a big woman and her husband. When we got under way and left the port behind, I began to cry.

"Don't cry, she said. We are only going for six months."

"I would never see Guatemala or El Salvador again."

"We worked in southern Mexico for a while. There, I made new friends. One was a lad with a wooden leg named Manuel Gonzalez. He and I made our way to the state of Vera Cruz. In Vera Cruz, we heard there was work up north where a huge dam was being built. It was called El Preson De La Boquilla near Ciudad Camargo. I, Manuel, and another youth named Celso, hopped rides on trains all the way up there. Celso and I always helped Manuel get on board.

"We were working at El Preson when the *Revolution* broke out in 1910. Then, the work stopped. That was when Pancho Villa and his men came to the Preson. He spoke in the Plaza De Los Toros and invited anyone who believed in the revolutionary cause to join him.

"After the revolution, I crossed over to El Paso where I rented a room for the Winter. The following Spring, they began recruiting work gangs for the Dawson coal mines and I signed up."

"I had been working there about three months when one morning there was an explosion inside the mine. For some strange reason, I did not report for work that morning. When we got to the site of the disaster, many people and especially women, were

already waiting outside the mine for some word about their loved ones. Later, when some of the dead were brought out, there was much weeping and wailing. So much that it was like a scene from the Day Of Judgment.

"One of the men who survived was a friend of mine. He was an Italian. He told another survivor, a Greek, 'I have been a miner all my life but this is my last day in the mines.'"

Don Felix also quit the mines. He worked on the railroad for a while in Topeka, Kansas. He then returned to New Mexico where he worked on a track gang for the El Paso And Southwestern and later the Southern Pacific Railroad.

In Tucumcari, he acquired a friendship with Don Juan Campos and Don Juan San Miguel. These men were respected builders in adobe and masonry. They were also lay preachers. "Don Juan Campos era el mejor albanil y de el tambien aprendi mucho, especialmente de las Sagradas Escrituras."

"Don Juan Campos was the best mason in town. I learned alot from him too, especially about the Holy Scriptures. From him I learned that a person had to be born again spiritually and that only through our Lord Jesus Christ was there salvation.

Almost always in our conversations, Don Felix would quote some Scripture from the Holy Bible. During one of our last visits, I recorded what he said:

"Duro mucho la guerra y me halle en lo mas pesado de los combates. Pero mi Señor Jesucristo me saco libre. El me ha librado de acciones sanguinarias y de ejecuciones. El es mi abogado; no tengo quien se duela de mi; soy huérfano. Soy como la hoja que arroja el viento aquí y allá y aquí acabare mi vida.

"The war lasted a long time and I found myself in the heaviest of combats. But my Lord Jesus Christ saw me through. He has delivered me from the bloodiest military actions and from executions. He is my advocate. I have no one to turn to but him. I am an orphan. I am as a leaf hurled to and fro by the wind and here my life will come to an end.

Don Felix passed away in Tucumcari and we buried him December 17, 1980. I will never forget him.