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Continuing studies in Rio Grande Valley history

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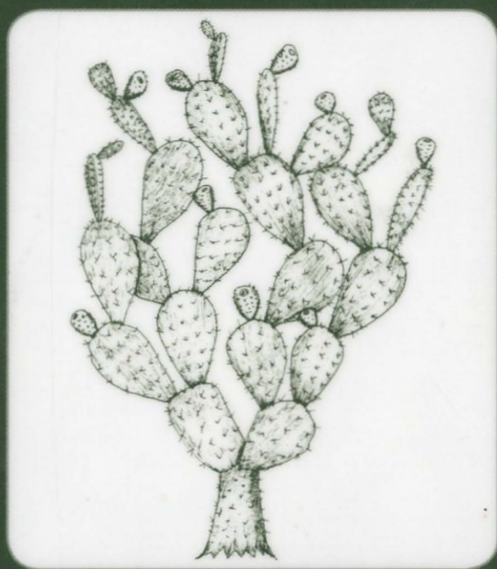
CONTINUING STUDIES IN RIO GRANDE VALLEY HISTORY

Edited by

Milo Kearney
Anthony Knopp
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Illustrated by

Rick Zamorano
Milo Kearney



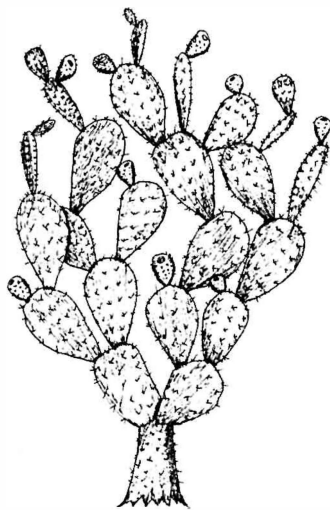
Volume Nine

The Texas Center for Border and Transnational Studies
The UTB/TSC Regional History Series
The University of Texas at Brownsville
and Texas Southmost College

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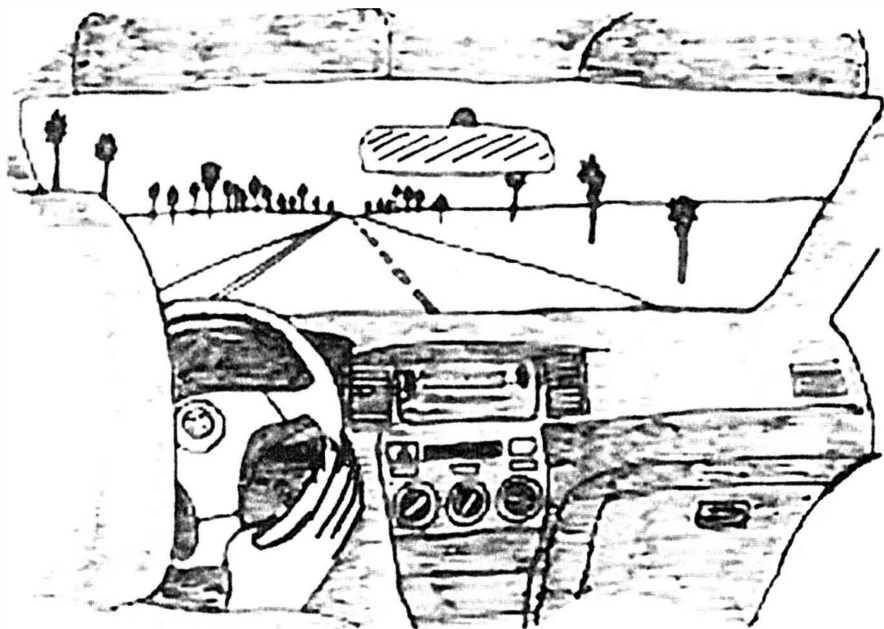
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Coming to the Valley

Palm trees signaling us down to the delta Valley.

Brave, exotic river, parrots, skies, cotton fields.

Then slowly the heat retreated, streets came to life,
children, Cantinflas movies, city parks, campus, new people.

The Gulf: seagulls exclaimed, waves proclaimed,
with an empty beach, limitless seashells, lone restaurant,
and back to main street, our bougainvillea place,
where, in peaceful walks, rested all we could want.

Matamoros! Reynosa! Pastel houses, sharp appetizers,
joyful mariachis, carved artesan chairs for sale,
gazebo concerts, mercado colors, marisco stopovers.

Sweet beginnings of a borderlands life.

– *Vivian Kearney*

GHOST STORIES OF
RANCHO PALMITO



The Ghosts of Historic Palmito Hill Ranch

by

Antonio N. Zavaleta

Over great lengths of time, streams of snowmelt carved channels through limestone crags, always dutifully flowing toward the Gulf of Mexico. Constantly descending, the great river meandered, sparing no land, obeying no government; splitting and merging over and over again. It spun off tributaries, arroyos, and streams, eventually becoming a *cause célèbre* for war and for delimiting nations. Approaching the final escarpment and flowing down to its valley terminus, the brave river snaked north, then south, like a whip, depositing fertile silt and river pebbles with grand design.

Each of the remnant moon-shaped bodies of water, called *resacas*, has a cache of land, some of which are quite large and highly-coveted *bancos*. Where the river rushes to its insignificant mouth, or *Boca Chica*, silt and sand-topped dunes are the last geographic land features before it enters the Gulf of Mexico. The dunes are unlike typical sand dunes, being capped with stands of ebony and mesquite, which serve as refuge for man and beast. Once named *el valle del bajo bravo*, over time, this fertile river delta became the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The primary channel knows no ownership, no boundary – providing life for all or for none. Life, suffering, and death are equally guaranteed along its banks.

Traveling westward on or along the river by ox-drawn wagon from the Gulf of Mexico, one encounters a series of small hills or clay dunes topped with soil, rich in vegetation and teeming with wildlife. The first of these clay dunes is only ten or fifteen feet above sea level at its highest point. Continuing west of Tarpon Bend, Palmito Hill is clearly visible, its elevation reaching a full 30 feet above the level of the Gulf. It has long provided a natural encampment site and vantage point for the surrounding area.

Prehistoric indigenous Coahuiltecan, sojourning groups from southern Mexico, and the earliest ranching families all recognized its strategic importance. Later, the hill was seen as a location from which to protect Matamoros (and, still later, Brownsville) from invasion by sea, and the War of the Rebellion would see its last gasp of battle fought on and around the hill. With time, the ghosts of Palmito Hill became legendary, each connected with its own unique story. The hill has always been a place of spirits and of ghosts (their vestiges). The majority of the ghosts known from here died as they lived. They haunt the hill to this day.

The following seven short stories are true and are recounted from direct observations and communications with the spirits and ghosts of Palmito Hill.

The Indian Ghosts

The murmuring voices of the first inhabitants of Palmito Hill are still heard today. The spirits linger patiently where they fell and are buried, waiting for someone to speak to them. A UTB/TSC student and trance medium, a *Huichol* shaman, and other seers have all easily and distinctly communicated messages from the ghosts to the living.

We met Jacinto, a *Huichol* elder, in *Real de Catorce*, the major pilgrimage site for his people, and subsequently invited him to Brownsville. While completing his life work and *manda* high atop the *sierra madre*, Jacinto began making regular trips to south Texas and, eventually, to the historic Palmito Hill Ranch. For most of his adult life, Jacinto had served as a *Huichol* shaman and healer, directly responsible for bringing rain to his thirsty people. This job was so important that the *Huichol* nation entrusted it to only seven elders, of whom Jacinto was one.

One day, Jacinto accompanied his Brownsville friends to the ancient Palmito Hill for a *carne asada* gathering. As he approached the ranch house, he intuitively knew that it was a special place. When he stepped onto the deck, he fell instantly into a trance; drawn

deeper and deeper into the spirit world by the voices calling him. Emerging half-an-hour later, he said to us, "I never expected what just happened here. There are spirits everywhere, and some are very old. There are *indios* like me and a prince of Mayan people. There are *negritos*, called buffalo soldiers, as well as many other people who lived and died here. They are all assembled around us and clamoring for a chance to be heard."

"The *Indios*, sparsely clad, weathered this harsh environment in life and their spirits live on here in death." Jacinto spoke cautiously, indicating that they did not know what to make of the living spirit communicator who had discovered them through space and time. A portal had been opened to the living after such a very long period of silence. "Brothers and sisters," the *Huichol's* spirit spoke, "why do you lament? You have been gone for so long!" They responded in unison, "There came a wind from the east shortly after the summer solstice that blew away the living and uncovered the dead. On that day, the living converted to spirits in the span of one sunrise. Our shaman knew by the wind that a storm was approaching, and we prepared, but never expected what befell us. Our village, our elders, our children were all swept away, blown away by the spirit of the eastern wind. Now we just wait to be released. We are not able to rightfully settle beyond the stars without our story being told. How else would you know that we were once here, that we once lived, and of what happened to us here that day? Now that you have heard us out, our spirits may rest. We may travel but we will always be connected to this spot where our world ended. We hope that you will return to us someday to hear our voices so that we may tell you of our sky travels and so that you may tell us of your earthly travels. We are the Indian ghosts of Palmito Hill."

The Mayan Prince

The young UTB student had always known that she was somehow different. The disembodied often spoke to her and through her. Never threatening, she simply served as their *materia*, their spirit medium, a vessel to communicate with the living. Palmito

Hill was the magical portal through which the veil between the past and present was lifted and through which communication could be facilitated.

On the day that the sun reached the spring equinox, the time around the Christian Easter, the student aimlessly collected spring flowers on the hill, never expecting to hear a princely voice. It was the stuff of fairy tales. She would be the first to document the burial of a Mayan prince on Palmito Hill and to sketch a drawing of the young prince. Through several conversations, the prince told her his story about his journey, sickness, and death on Palmito Hill. Years later, the *Huichol* shaman confirmed the student's initial contact with the prince and the story continued.

The prince told her, "So many years ago my canoe train drummed its way northward from the Petén route to the great Mississippi and the mound-building kingdom located in the valleys up the great river. As it had often happened before, we camped on this hill, Palmito Hill, the halfway point between the beginning of our journey far to the south in the land of the Maya and the mouth of the great river which lies to the northeast. We were restocking our supplies when I was taken ill with the black vomit. Resting to no avail, my spirit was called home to my ancestors, my earthly remains buried in the sandy soil on the hill. I was laid to rest with all of the ceremony due my station and I have longed to speak, spirit to spirit, so that my grave and my human remains might be properly honored with the burning of sacred *copal*. I reach out to you, earthly spirit, so that I may communicate my request to the mortals who visit here. Unlike you, they mostly do not hear me. I simply ask that you know that I am here, and that you ask them to honor, from time to time, my eternal presence on this hill with sacred smoke. For this kindness you show my spirit I will bless you and benefit those who do this, knowing that you have pleased the spirit of Kal-Balam of Palmito Hill."

The Buffalo Soldiers

After having told us of the *indios* and corroborating the student's story of the Mayan prince, the *Huichol* shaman spoke again. "I can see that there was once a time when great armies roamed this place. It was a violent time. For years, they observed one another, circling and avoiding. Then a great battle ensued – white against black – while a third army observed the carnage from the southern bank of the river but did not engage.

Today, the ghosts of the dead of all three armies lie on the battlefield, buried where they fell. These sentinels rise up to greet unsuspecting visitors to Palmito Hill. At times the sound of cannon fire can be heard here, as can the wails of the dying following rifle shots. The *Huicholito* told us that many of the ghost soldiers are still here with us. They walk the battlefield of their agony and long to be set free. Their horses are heard pulling heavy caissons.

Along the south bank of the river, across from the hill, one can occasionally hear French being spoken – the chattering soldiers of Napoleon III, long gone from this earth, continuing their conversations as they long for their homes. They approach anyone who looks for them and is willing to talk to them because it is only through this communication that they may rest.

La Llorona

From the earliest settlement of Europeans along this river on Palmito Hill, the crying woman, or *La Llorona*, has been a permanent presence as she searches endlessly for her children. I am a member of one of the many ranching families who have lived here for more than 200 years, and my uncle, Prax Orive, Jr., grew up here. He told me that *La Llorona* is so common that, when he was a young boy, they were not frightened of her. Doomed to search eternally as punishment for her deeds, she is viewed more as a pathetic figure. Parents tell their children, "Listen! The crying woman is passing by the river." All chatter ceases as the children strain to listen for her wail. Easily confused with the screech of an

owl or a hawk night-fishing along the river bank, *La Llorona's* cry is more of an extended but always faint siren. The spirit/ghost of *La Llorona* has been documented at Palmito Hill and her story has been passed down to all generations who have lived there for more than two centuries.

The *Duendes*

Duendes or nature elves – a common spirit/ghost motif – are believed to have always lived on Palmito Hill. On Palmito Hill the *duendes* are forever vigilant, protecting the hill and its animals as they watch the living convert to spirit. The forest elves are pleased when the living happen by. *Duendes* love to taunt and play tricks on the living by moving and removing personal items, only to return them later to their puzzled owners. Sometimes, personal belongings are returned much later and, other times, not at all. At Palmito Hill, *duendes* cavort in our nighttime dreams, pulling our toes and holding the sleeping down to their night sheets. Harmless pranksters of Palmito, the *duendes* have seen all the earthly inhabitants come and go. They are also the rightful caretakers of the ghosts of Palmito Hill.

In recent times, a Palmito Hill ranch hand reported continual encounters with *duendes* during both day and night. The *duendes* would tug on his toes at night and hold him down to the bed or lift him high above his bed and remove his personal objects. He was told to propitiate them with an offering of food or drink, and, after that, they seemed to leave him alone.

In 2008, a group of kayakers, making their way from Brownsville to the mouth of the river, camped overnight at the historic ranch at Palmito Hill and – while they were not personally bothered – many of their personal items, including a cell phone and a digital camera, disappeared during the night. They left the next morning without these important things, continuing on their trek to the mouth of the river, but very distressed by their loss. Two months later, all of the items turned up in the ranch house refrigerator and were returned to the owners, who were elated to get them back.

The experience converted them into respectful believers in the *duendes* of Palmito Hill.

The Peasant Girl

More than ten consecutive generations of our family (Treviño-García-Gómez-Chapa-Cisneros-Orive) have lived out their entire lives on and died on Palmito Hill, along with the many others born and buried on the ranches at Palmito. As a result, at one time, Palmito Hill maintained its own birth certificates and cemetery.

The many generations who have lived on the hill have seen their cultural identity change over time from Spanish to Mexican to Tejano and, most recently, to American. Their sweat has fertilized the earth, and their bones and spirits stand guard over the current residents of Palmito Hill Ranch.

So many years have passed that the location of the family cemetery is forgotten to all but the informed. Every once in a while, a wayward tourist stops by wanting to know where it is situated. It is still marked on many United States Geodesic Survey (USGS) maps. Ghostly spirits arise at night from this cemetery to roam the hill, appearing lovingly to their descendants, but menacingly to those who do not heed their warnings or who seek to defile their resting places.

One of the most frequently-seen ghosts of Palmito Hill is a young peasant girl dressed in outmoded clothing who appears in ranch houses, only to disappear through the walls when spoken to. My Uncle Prax once told me the story of a little ghost girl who appeared in his grandmother's living room on the ranch, only to dematerialize through a wall when asked to identify herself. So common is her appearance that she is now greeted when she appears. Satisfied by a simple salutation, she turns into mist until the next time she comes to remind us that the ghosts of Palmito Hill are indeed real.

The Milk Maid

Palmito Hill's rarest ghost is referred to as the milkmaid or wagon maid. This ghost dates back to the mid-19th century. Apparently, she was the daughter of one of the farm hands assigned to carry milk jugs from a ranch dairy to area ranches, always on Wednesdays. One day, while traveling along her route, the horses were startled by a rattlesnake. The wagon flipped over, crushing the maid to death. To this day, she can be seen on Palmito Hill driving her horse-drawn wagon.

I have seen her myself. No matter how determined a modern driver is to catch up to her, her wagon can never be reached. Speeding ever so quickly down the road, the driver becomes frustrated that the girl in the wagon simply disappears from sight. Most people who witness her apparition are not aware they are seeing a ghost wagon. They simply think that the wagon turned off without knowing exactly where. But those who know the legends of Palmito Hill realize that they have seen the ghost of the milkmaid.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

BIOGRAPHY



Against the Odds Dr. Juliet V. García, Border Educator

by

Manuel F. Medrano

Dr. Juliet V. García, President of the University of Texas at Brownsville/ Texas Southmost College, became the first Hispanic woman in the United States to head a college or university. In many ways her own life embodies the essence of her place of origin, the Rio Grande Valley, an area of profound history, tradition and perseverance. Despite personal and professional challenges, she has become one of the most respected educators in the country. There is a Mexican proverb or *dicho* which says “*El que adelante no mira, atras se queda* (He who doesn’t look ahead stays behind).” Throughout her life Dr. García has never looked back.

She was born on May 18, 1949 in Brownsville, Texas, to Romeo Villarreal Yzaguirre and Paulita Lozano Villarreal. Her father was born in Monterrey, Mexico, but grew up in the Mexican border town of Camargo, Tamaulipas. His family, like many others, was affected by the economic and political chaos of the Mexican Revolution. Consequently, they immigrated to the United States with almost no resources. Dr. García remembers family accounts that...

people were fleeing the war; all they wanted was to be safe. And they left everything they had, including their education, their family, and history and came to the United States with no English and no support. The picture taken for their passport was of the entire family looking sad to have to leave their home and a bit scared at the prospect of beginning life in a new country.¹

Her mother was born in Harlingen, Texas, and came from a south Texas pioneer family. Both of Dr. García's parents were high school graduates. They met at a dance in San Benito, Texas. The dances for *Mexicanos* or *Latinos* were held there because most of the *Mexicana* girls were not invited to the Anglo parties in Harlingen, and the Mexican boys from Brownsville did not have a lot of money, so they met halfway in San Benito.

Dr. García's father was a very intelligent student who made "A"s in geometry. She remembers that "he always bragged that he was very good in mathematics, language, and writing." One of his high school classmates was Américo Paredes, late folklorist and professor from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. García recalls that "when I met Dr. Paredes, he asked if I was a daughter of Romeo Villarreal. I replied, 'Yes, sir.' Dr. Paredes actually remembered a poem that my father had written in Spanish for the *Palmegian*, a hybrid college and high school yearbook created during the Depression." Her father was also a romantic – the reason two of his children were named Romeo and Julieta. Regrettably, he was not able to attend college because of the Great Depression. His own father had died and his older brothers got married, so he became the breadwinner of his family, responsible for taking care of his mother and younger siblings. Mr. García remembered his friends leaving to college and becoming pharmacists or medical doctors, and yet he made better grades than they had in high school. He was not bitter, however, understanding that circumstances, not ability, had prevented him from attending college.

Dr. García's mother grew up in an environment of segregated neighborhoods, segregated churches, and segregated schools in Harlingen, Texas. Anglos and Mexicans literally lived on different sides of the railroad track, so she was expected to attend the "Mexican" school. Her father, however, was determined that his children would attend the Anglo school, because they had better teachers and better equipment. When he was told that his daughter Paulita would be attending the Mexican school, he became upset and decided to visit, along with his children, the Anglo high

school principal. Although Mr. Villarreal was a peaceful man, he took a shotgun with him and “persuaded” the principal to allow his children to attend the Anglo school. Paulita eventually became the Salutarian of her Harlingen High School graduating class, missing being Valedictorian by only a fraction of a point. García remembered that “my father would tell the story – it got better with the retelling – that there was no way a Mexicana was going to be Valedictorian in Harlingen in those days.” She was one of the two *Mexicana* graduates from the Anglo high school. Years later, Dr. García’s mother told her, “*Mijita*, you have to be as smart or smarter than anyone else and eventually you will get the jobs; you will get what you need.”

In many ways, García and her brothers grew up in the best of two worlds. Her father told them to “learn Spanish; don’t forget your history.” Her mother said, “Learn English; you’re in this country.” Dr. García remembers, “I grew up very blessed. My life was full of choices and was not predetermined by my parents.... They taught me not to get caught up in the labels that we have given our world.” My father said that God did not label these religions; man did. It was a marvelous environment to grow up, proud of two cultures and two languages. She recalled that “we were part of a very special place. We didn’t know it when we lived here. We had to leave to figure that out.” We were different from our father’s family in Monterrey and our mother’s family from Corpus Christi. “I believe we are resilient; we’ve lived in a world of interface between two cultures, languages, economies, and we are better than the sum of its two parts.” Her brothers and she knew they had to excel. Their parents told them that “whatever we do, we’re going to help you get what we were not able to get,” and that meant a college education.

Soon she and her brothers were attending Los Ebanos (the Ebony trees) Elementary School. There she was exposed to the realities of ethnic segregation. After two years of kindergarten, she passed the diagnostic test which placed her in second grade along with her best friend, Cynthia Miller. However, because she was Mexican,

she was placed in the Spanish-speaking class, and Cynthia was placed in the English-speaking class. The other Mexican children made fun of García and told her that she was “*muy gringa*” (very Anglo). As a result she came home crying every day. Her mother went to the school and requested that her daughter be placed in the English-speaking classroom, but to no avail. The principal apologized, but said that there was no more room in the English-speaking class. Dr. García recalls, “my mother went home and told the story to my father. He didn’t have a shotgun, thank goodness!”

Her father put on his Sunday clothes and a Stetson hat and went to see Ms. Sharp, the principal. He requested what his wife had requested and was given the same answer. Mr. Villarreal promptly replied, “Then I have no choice but to take out an ad in the newspaper, and I am going to tell people what you have done to my daughter. Thank you very much.” He proceeded to leave the school very peacefully. With her *tacones* (high heels) echoing on the wooden floor, Ms. Sharp ran after him and said, “Oh! Mr. Villarreal, I think we can work something out.” His daughter was promptly placed in the English speaking second grade. Dr. García remembers ...

That was my first experience with racism having to do with language...more importantly, it was my first experience with advocacy, parental advocacy, and the notion that you had to protect your children. That was your job, not because you are educated or more educated than the teacher. It was because it was your job; I’ve seen my mother do it and my father do it.

Generally the rest of her elementary school years were uneventful until she was in fifth grade. Dr. García remembers...

My mother died and changed our world. I was very young to lose a mother. My older brother was eleven and my younger brother was just starting first grade; he was five. But my father was very strong

and what he did was to sit us down after that happened he said to us, 'You survived this; you survived what no one should have to and because of that, you are very strong. So nothing that will happen to you from here on in your lives is worse than what you have already gone through. So don't ever consider yourself weak or vulnerable. Think about what you've already survived. Anything else now from here on you can handle'.... What a wonderful gift of handling what could have been a disastrous environment. My father refused to separate us or turn our rearing over to aunts. Instead, he reorganized his life to care for us.

Her middle school experience was both memorable and challenging. She was a member of the honor society and the cheerleading squad. Her principal, Mr. Simon Rivera, was strict but respected every student. Dr. García reminisces about those years, "junior high is a very tough time, and Central Junior High was a tough school of its day... There you made life's choices and decided which way we were going to go, and he (Rivera) helped us through those in a very profound way."

Dr. García describes her high school years as "useless almost." In many ways it was just a continuation of the junior high that she had already done. Why do it all over again? She remembers, "I think I was an officer in the sophomore class, and then I just kind of checked out."

In 1966, as a senior at Brownsville High School, she and a few other students enrolled at Texas Southmost College, which was "a whole new world for us, and it was fun." Her teachers were knowledgeable and helpful. Throughout these years, her father supported, guided, and inspired her by filling the roles of both father and mother.

Her sophomore year was spent at Southwest Texas State University (Texas State University today) in San Marcos. During

her junior year, at just eighteen years of age, she was engaged to Oscar García, one of her older brother's friends. They had met five years before, but had not dated. With a smile she recalled ...

So five years later he came back; we started dating.... I married my sweetheart.... Oscar and I moved to Houston and lived there because that's where the jobs were in those days. I needed to go to school and he needed to work. I enrolled at the University of Houston majoring in Speech and English. My husband had promised my father that if we married before I finished college that he would make sure that I finished. That was my father's only request.... Our two children were born within two or three years of our marriage. Oscar David was born in May 1970, and Paulita was born in June 1971."

Dr. García received her Bachelor of Arts degree in January 1970 and Master of Arts degree in May 1972. College was quite a different experience. "U. of H. was a tough environment, too, and was not friendly to *Mexicanas* and *Mexicanos* in those days." In addition to being a student, a teaching assistant, and a mother of two young children, she was a member of the debate team. Dr. García fondly recalls ...

In those days, if your debate team was mixed (young men and young women), you were required to compete in the men's division of debate. I had a young man as a partner, so I debated during college always in the men's division. Coupled with growing up with two brothers and my father, debating men in college was probably the best preparation I could have had for my life's work.

Dr. García's first teaching assignment was at the University of Houston as a teaching assistant. She was teaching speech, and recalls, "I had a lot of students who didn't want a García teach-

ing them how to speak and I knew it.... once they met me and we started to chat, they were okay with it, but it was obvious." "When I first walked in, I learned that we talked pretty good in the Valley, actually. So being from Houston did not necessarily mean in my little world of speech and rhetoric and public address that you were advantaged."

She also taught as a substitute in the Houston public schools. It was then that she realized that she had to teach in college because she might not survive anywhere else. "*Me hicieron garra* (they tore me to shreds)," she remembers. On one occasion, the junior high students she was teaching locked her in the classroom, and she was yelling for the principal. Shortly after, she told her husband that she would continue her studies. "I could not do high school or junior high."

Dr. García readily acknowledges the support of her husband, Oscar. After she received her B.A. in Speech and English at age twenty, he told her, "you know this is kind of easy for you; you should go on." She remarked that it wasn't easy, but it made sense that she continue because they were already there. Her daughter, Paulita, was born when she was in graduate school. Dr. García remembers, "I was known as the pregnant Mexican the whole time I was at the University of Houston. In fact, it was probably the best thing, because we grew up very poor....but it kept us very, very close and created a very strong family unit that to this day is powerful."

After completing her Master's degree, she was hired at Pan American University in Edinburg, Texas, as a speech professor. She became the first *Mexicana* in the Speech Department there. In those days, students were required to pass a speech test to graduate. Dr. García remembers:

In essence, it was a voice articulation class. It was either speak like Walter Cronkite or if you don't.... you will not graduate. Well, of course, it was

aimed at the *Mexicano*. It was a test that used the International Phonetic Alphabet, the IPA.... Poor students, you can imagine. And I was a good test giver and would flunk them or pass them and they would be in my class. Well, it worked until I flunked a young Anglo boy... Everything broke loose at Pan Am.... They had a department meeting, and I was called to explain. I said this is the test and this is his accent and you asked me to compare his accent to this test. He failed. The boy sat in my class the whole semester... I knew this was probably not where I needed to land. It's not what I wanted to do, just give people speech tests.

Although she was offered another year at Pan American University, Dr. Arnulfo Oliveira, President at Texas Southmost College called her and offered her a job. He asked her why she was not teaching in Brownsville, and she replied that she had not been offered a job there. Oliveira then offered her a job and she was hired as the first Hispanic in the English Department at Texas Southmost College. As an instructor there she recalls that:

I especially enjoyed the Vietnam vets. Those were the days when we were getting lots of veterans. They are the ones who taught me how to be a good teacher. They understood life better than I did, and they had lived it; they had been hurt by it; they had grown from it, and very often they would give the class a substance that I could never have given them. We all recognized it, and I was very lucky to have those young men in those days.

Dr. García then made a pivotal decision. In 1974, she enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in Communications and Linguistics. Her children were two and three years old. Her husband worked day and night to provide for their family and to support her studies. They lived in married

student housing. The university had twenty-two libraries, and her goal was to visit all of them. She remembers, "What could be so terrible about this place that had twenty-two libraries? Why didn't we have these in Brownsville? I came there to understand how powerful a university experience could be to a student, what a difference it could make in your life and your family's lives... so we enjoyed our miserable, poor time." In August 1976, she received her Ph.D. in Communications and Linguistics, gratefully acknowledging her family's support in achieving this milestone.

Upon graduation, she returned as an adjunct professor at Pan American University at Brownsville and Speech instructor at Texas Southmost College. Dr. García remembers that what she enjoyed most about the teaching was the challenge. Teaching rhetoric and persuasion was one thing, but doing them was quite another. She left the classroom to see if her skills could really affect change. In 1981, she became Dean of Arts and Sciences for Texas Southmost College, and she served in that capacity for five years.

Dr. García then applied for the Presidency of Texas Southmost College. The first time she applied, Dr. García was less than thirty years old and recalls:

I felt I needed to try my hand at something else. I knew I wasn't going to get it. It's strange to apply for a job knowing you're not going to get it. I remember going to tell my husband that I'm going to do this and I'm not going to get it. He said then why are you doing it? I said I'm not sure, but I have to.... I was a woman in that last round of applicants, and I knew why I was in the last round. They needed a woman, and I was the applicant. I went through the interview process, and it was humiliating. They asked my age.... if I was going on a trip with a man, would I go on the same plane, and, if I did, would I stay in the same hotel?

From that interview Dr. García learned that when people are being interviewed, they must be treated with dignity.

Years later, for the second time, she applied for the Presidency of Texas Southmost College, and was hired in 1986. Her first lesson was an important one. She remembers:

I was not the Queen of England or the Queen of Mexico or the Queen of TSC. I was simply given a bigger job and not much to do it with and that I couldn't do it alone.... I brought in people and said, 'I need your help'; and these were people who really didn't want me to be the President, and I was asking them for help, and they all helped me to a person.... It was a lesson in seeking help and giving credit to people who help you and then solving a problem judiciously by fulfilling your responsibility. I've been helped by men, by women, by Anglos, by Hispanics, by janitors and by Chancellors.... I continue to learn patience. The hardest part for me is to be quiet and swallow, because you can't fight every battle, and you save it sometimes for the bigger ones and that's hard.... It's not about you; it's about who you represent, and so that's a constant struggle for me. Someday I'll figure that out, how to do it even better.

Dr. García's achievements and awards are extensive. As President of Texas Southmost College, she spearheaded a successful community endowment campaign which raised one million dollars in private donations from citizens in an impoverished area matched by two million dollars in federal funds. The result was a three-million-dollar endowment for college district students who achieved "A"s and "B"s in more rigorous secondary school courses and attended Texas Southmost College. In 1992 she led the development of a unique partnership between the University of Texas at Brownsville (at that time an upper level undergraduate and grad-

uate level university) and Texas Southmost College (a community college). During her tenure as President of University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, the campus has grown from 49 acres to over 382 acres. Additionally, endowment scholarships have increased dramatically, baccalaureate degrees offered have more than doubled; masters degrees offered have tripled, and a new doctorate in education is now available.²

Throughout her career, she has been recognized for exemplary leadership. In 1989, she received the National Network of Hispanic Women of the Hall of Fame Education Award. One year later, she was named as one of the country's 100 Most Influential Hispanics by *Hispanic Business Magazine*. In 2000, Dr. García was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame for lifetime achievement in education. In 2003, Brownsville's Dr. Juliet V. Garcia Middle School was inaugurated in her honor. She periodically visits the school and encourages the students to set and achieve high goals. Since then, she has served as Chair of the American Council on Education, the nation's most prestigious educational policy organization. In 2006, she was the recipient of the Hispanic Heritage Award in Education presented at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.³

Dr. García believes that being from the Rio Grande Valley is an asset to her administrative work. During her college days at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, professors pronounced her name Vilareal, Venereal, or by other variations. She remembers being refused service in a restaurant, and realizing that being from *El Valle* (The Valley) meant more than talking differently and seeing palm trees along the streets. It meant being treated differently, too. It was also, however, like "a badge of courage." Knowing that about the students at the University of Texas at Brownsville provides an insight to the experiences that they bring with them.

"Wonderful" describes how Dr. García feels about her work at the University. She says:

I have to tell you; it's hard in some ways, but it's never the same. I might be dealing with a legislator, testifying in Austin or Washington, or trying to bite my tongue at a Chancellor's meeting and not say anything. Being politic sometimes, being in an environment that includes board members, faculty, staff, carpenters and presidents. It's helping build a University here – architecture, air conditioning systems, insurance benefits, budgets, curricula, retention, and recruitment. It is statistics and governance. It is people's lives, affecting their lives by hiring them or not.... It's having trust in people and learning how to trust and not fear the results.... It's reaching at all of the things that are threatened inside of us and stretching them and challenging yourself.

Among her contemporary challenges are decreasing budgets, increasing costs, and student achievement and retention. In 2008, she challenged the Department of Homeland Security's decision to build a border wall dividing the University of Texas at Brownsville campus, and won a court ruling preventing that. In November of 2009, *Time Magazine* named her one of the ten best college Presidents of the year.⁴ Dr. García, however, continues to look forward. She says....

I'm proud to have been given a blessing to be part of important work. This is our work, and it is important... How fortunate, how lucky we are that someone said 'You there; do important work,' and you spend your life doing that. It's such an honor. There is not a day in this job that is not very humbling, especially as we get bigger and have brilliant faculty. We become all those morphisms of what we were.... I believe that we are a special place. I tell people that if I weren't here, I would be trying to figure out how to get here.

Our success in life is sometimes measured by how much we improve the community around us. Dr. Juliet V. García's legacy is the improvement of higher education in the Rio Grande Valley and her ability to make an educational vision into an educational reality. The proof is all around her at the University of Texas at Brownsville.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all of the information in this article is based on an interview with Juliet V. García by Manuel F. Medrano on 2 August 2005.

2 <http://pubs.utb.edu/president/Bio.htm>.

3 <http://pubs.utb.edu/president/Bio.htm>.

4 "Time Magazine Picks Garcia," *The Brownsville Herald* (13 November 2009), page 1.

Lucile Champion's Brownsville Remembrances of another Time

by

Frank Champion Murphy

On February 25, 1889, in the historic Spanish colonial town of Mier, Mexico, the American Consular Agent, Dr. A. L. Edwards, delivered his granddaughter, Lucile Elizabeth Champion. Thirty-one years later Lucile would become my mother. Her mother, twenty-three year old Georgia-born Henrietta Elizabeth Edwards Champion, had come with her husband, Frank Champion, over a hundred miles up the winding Rio Grande from their home in Brownsville for her father's care in the birth of her child.

After Henrietta's birth in 1866, following the defeat of the Confederacy, the Edwards family had left the ruins of their native Macon, joining thousands of other Georgians looking desperately for renewal. The only direction that held hope was west; not in the wasted deep south of Alabama or Mississippi or Louisiana but in the vast, wide-open promise of Texas. The family consisted, besides forty-year-old Dr. Edwards (I can find no record of the two names represented by the initials A.L.), his wife, Elizabeth Dupree (of the sizeable French Huguenot community in Macon), son James, and, besides little Henrietta, daughters Kate and Ellen. By accident or design, the Edwards found their way through south Texas to the Rio Grande, and apparently found the exotic allure of Mexico irresistible, living for some years on the Mexican bank of the "Rio Bravo" in Camargo and in Mier. Son James, having lived his boyhood and coming-of-age in Mexico, eventually became a permanent resident of Saltillo.¹

Frank Champion's father, Albert (then Campeoni) with Albert's four younger brothers and a nephew had left their native northern Italian province of Istria to escape conscription by the hated

Austrian Habsburg conquerors, to sail the world in the great sail ships. Tall, large-framed men, they were light-skinned and fair-haired, typical of the Northern Italian physique. The second-generation men that I knew were of this mold. In pictures of Albert's son Frank (Lucile's father), he appears to be blonde, well over six feet. The seafaring brothers eventually rejoined in New Orleans and again in Point Isabel, Tejas, then known as *El Frontón de Santa Ysabel*, during the American war with Mexico in 1847 - 1849. All the Champions (save Andrew, who went off and disappeared in the gold rush of 1849) married daughters of the Solís family of Point Isabel, descendants of Spanish land grantees: Albert to Estefania, Peter to Felicitas, Nicholas to Teresa, Joséph to Marcela García (Solís cousin) and George (nephew) to Cirilda. In 1849, the city of Brownsville did not exist. All the Champion men, imbued with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, became active in commerce, cattle ranching and governmental affairs in Point Isabel and eventually Brownsville and Cameron County.² Their issue was prodigious; when Lucile arrived in the third generation, she had literally hundreds of aunts, uncles, cousins scattered throughout the Rio Grande valley and beyond; Mexico and Spain.

So how and where did Frank Champion of Brownsville, Texas, and Henrietta Edwards of Mier, Mexico, meet and fall in love? We have no record but some pretty good clues. It's apparent that Frank, a young businessman active in city and county affairs in Brownsville, might have had cause to make frequent visits to Rio Grande City, a remote little clapboard Tex-Mex cow town, the county seat of Starr County, about fifteen miles below Mier, on the American side of the Rio Grande. Rio Grande City would have been the closest point of U.S. governmental contact for the U.S. consular agent in Mier. It's not too hard to imagine a bored and restless young Henrietta Edwards accompanying her father as often as possible on his visits to the Starr County courthouse. If a tall, well-dressed, impressive young American gentleman were introduced to Henrietta and her father, the effect could have been electric.

Whatever the circumstances, and after whatever period of time, Henrietta Edwards, 23, and Frank Champion, 32, were married in a civil ceremony at the Starr County courthouse on a most likely sweltering – 100+ degrees? – August 18, 1886, by Judge James Livingston. Henrietta was born into the Anglican faith, but the church marriage was celebrated in Brownsville in a Catholic ceremony. A sheet of official stationery headed “Office of Judge, Starr County, Texas”, covered with penned well-wishes from several of the county officials who were present and participated in the ceremony, tells us that they were good friends of Frank and Henrietta and that they had watched the romance bloom:

Mr. Frank Champion – Dear Sir, May your days be days of joy and bliss and be the era of many Champions ---- Jas. Livingston, Your Compadre

Me too, E. Marks, County Clerk & License issuer.

Yo Tambien, Robert Langley, Dy. Inspector, Hides & Animals.

Your Padrino [Best Man – ed.] E. Downey Davis, Assessor.

Sadly, Judge Livingston’s fervent wish for the newlyweds would fall short of fulfillment; their first-born child, a son, was to die on the day of his birth. When Lucile was three, her baby sister Gussie arrived. South coastal Texas was, to put it kindly, not a healthy environment, with its tidal flats and countless resacas, highly productive of malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Sanitation in Brownsville was, at best, rudimentary, with the dread diseases of cholera, typhus and yellow fever all too prevalent. In the spring of 1894 Brownsville apparently suffered an outbreak of typhoid fever, and, on the 16th of May, Henrietta, my grandmother, succumbed at the age of thirty-one. Just over three weeks later, on June 10th, little Gussie, only two years old, also died.

In less than a month's time, little five-year-old Lucile was all that was left from Frank Champion's marriage of less than eight years. Although just forty-two, he would never marry again, and Lucile became the center of his universe. In 1890, the year after Lucile's arrival, Frank's father, Albert Champion (the colorful old sailor, ranchero, entrepreneur, and patriarch of the clan in America) died, and the planets that came to make up Frank's universe were his Spanish mother, Estefania (Solís), his three younger sisters, Eufemia, Rosa, and Anita (all maiden ladies), and his young cousin Petra Champion (ten years older than Lucile, the tenth child of Albert's youngest brother Joséph).

The *tías* could not have been more different in both appearance and personality. All three were born between 1858 and 1864, Eufemia and Rosa in Point Isabel, and Anita in Matamoros, Mexico. Eufemia, the oldest, was well named, petite and lively, her clothes the most feminine and stylish, but the appearance of demure femininity was deceiving; there was a twinkle in her eyes that hinted an unfettered spirit. One afternoon in the siesta quiet she took me into her sunny bedroom and showed me a nickel plated, lady-sized .32 caliber revolver in its black patent-leather holster. With obvious pride, she explained how, as a young woman in the lawless days of the cattle wars, she had dealt with cattle buyers and worse on the ranch of her father, Albert Champion. As she put it with effective understatement,

There were some pretty rough characters. Sometimes during siesta she would take out a little sack of Bull Durham and cigarette papers, open her second floor bedroom door to the little balcony and "build a smoke," as the cowboys would say. I would smoke Bull Durham later, and it was a cowboy's smoke, all right. I never knew any other Champion women to smoke, even into the "womens' lib" era.

Rosa, the middle one, was tall and imperious of mien like the Champion men, always in command with few words and no non-

sense. When with much hustle and bustle the family made preparations for an outing, I remember Rosa's declaration coming with absolute finality, "¡Vámanos! ¡Ay voy!" Anita was the youngster, the last of Albert and Estefania's seven, who entered the world a refugee in Matamoros when the family sought haven from the Union Army's occupation of the lower Rio Grande during the Civil War. Of medium height and frame, her round face with kind blue-gray eyes and placid expression had a distinctly "Champion look". Her way was one of quiet, thoughtful intelligence and good humor, knowing and accepting. She also had witnessed Brownsville's turbulent days, remembering having seen as a twelve-year-old girl the pile of bodies of cattle thieves dumped in the Plaza by the Texas Rangers.

The three were to see little of the world outside of the Rio Grande Valley, but on at least one occasion they ventured south into Mexico to visit cousins in Orizaba, near Vera Cruz. Taking in the sights of this old colonial city, they chanced upon a fountain graced by a sculptural group of gloriously unadorned male figures. Rosa and Anita averted their eyes in red-faced distress and tugged at Eufemia, who stood transfixed. "Listen", she said, "you go ahead if you want – this may be the only chance I'll ever get to see a naked man!"

If the three "tías" were to become Lucile's mothers, Petra would be her sister. She remained in the household throughout her life, unmarried, and as well as being my godmother was one of the closest, most loved and loving members of our immediate family. I don't know at what age or for what reason Petra Champion came into Frank's household; my best guess is that Frank and his sisters wanted little Lucile not to be the only child in a household of so many adults, but to have an "older sister", for instruction, counsel and advice, as well as to share confidences with. If this was the plan, they couldn't have made a better choice. By the time Lucile needed these qualities, they were there in Petra, ten years older, a young woman with maturity, wisdom, and of especial value, wit.

She had her own fresh, independent view of her world; for her, and it was for all she shared it with, a fun place to be.

The wonder of Petra is that she never married. With all those qualities, she was not just good-looking, but a beauty, with dark, flashing, expressive eyes, winning smile, and, without exaggeration, an hour-glass figure. There had been a man, apparently for her the only man, and it would seem that here as with so much in her life, she was ahead of her time: the man she loved was Jewish. Both families were old families with deep religious roots, and there was an insurmountable impasse. We so often heard Tia Petra say, years later, with a bit of a wistful twinkle, "If I could have just sprinkled a little holy water on him!" She took great pride in both her Italian and Spanish roots, and she loved Mexico equally. Her one trip abroad was to Italy on an Italian liner to visit our Italian relatives, the Campeonis, in Rovigno on the Adriatic coast. I was with her in the Matamoros market when the shopkeeper, hoping to make a better deal with this "*Americana*", said "Senora, your Spanish is beautiful!" On to his game, she drew herself up and replied, "*Soy una Mejicana!*"

Two households of Champions lived close by and so were very much a part of Lucile's and the *tías'* daily lives; Francisca, "*Tia Panchita*", Frank's and the *Tías'* older sister, married Don Miguel Fernández, a wealthy Spanish merchant and a founder of the First National Bank, and she was unstintingly generous and thoughtful toward her family. The parents of nine children, they lived two blocks away on Elizabeth Street.

Tia Panchita's first child, Rosalia Fernández, married José Gómez. They lived with their three children, José, (Joe), María (Maruza) and Anthony, at the north end of the block, a block away from us on Washington Street. Joe, with a history degree from Columbia University, never married, and (as far as I know) never worked, but lived in a state of affable scholarly detachment. Maruza married well and raised her two children, Dolores and Rodney, in New Orleans. When Anthony was four he was ring-bearer in Lucile's

wedding. The closest in age – and proximity – to us Murphys, Tony was the golden boy who had it all – smart, handsome, personality, “crack shot”, etc., etc. Anthony went on to the University of Texas for a degree in Petroleum Production Engineering. He went to work in Houston for the Humble Oil Co., and in that primitive corporate culture before cubicles, the friendly young chap at the next desk introduced himself as Winthrop Rockefeller.

Came the war, and in 1943 Tony received a Navy commission. Like so many of us in the service, he had time to think about what he really wanted to do when he got back; Tony saw tourism as a coming industry in the postwar Valley and in Brownsville, where his heart had always belonged, he built a fine motel. Around 1953, Evelyn and I, on a visit to Brownsville, went out to the motel to see Tony, where he and his family, including his mother, were living. Tia Rosalia was cut much from the same mold as Tia Rosa – with strong opinions and no nonsense. The conversation got around to her grand-daughter, Dolores, and Tony told us she had, no doubt through his connection, married a Rockefeller, and was living in Arkansas, where Winthrop had established a Rockefeller colony. Rosalia, unimpressed, barked out her feelings with typical brevity: “Bautistas...play polo.”

Typical of the old families of the border with Spanish heritage, Spanish was the everyday language of the Champion household, though all were completely bilingual, with the possible exception of Estefania (Solís), who grew up in Spanish colonial Mexico before it became the republic and then the state of Texas. Perhaps because of her and the Mexican servants, it was simpler for the family to converse almost entirely in Spanish. The Champions’ Spanish may have been a pure dialect, coming as it did through the Solís family. Invariably it was the first language learned, and so inevitably their English carried a trace of an accent. Lucile was conscious of this, and in a letter to her fiancé, anticipating her move to Iowa, she said “I was thinking...your friends up there are going to think I talk awfully funny and hardly understand me, my “Yankie” friends down here are forever telling me I talk funny

and making me repeat.” Of course, hers was one of the two most familiar voices in my young life and I was completely oblivious to any difference; I suspect her friends might have been having fun more with the phrasing and the idiom derived from the Spanish, as with the slight accent. As popular as she was, and with her sense of humor, she could laugh about it.

Growing up in such a household, Lucile should have been hopelessly spoiled, but the truth could not have been more different. Perhaps the wrenching collapse of this very sensitive child’s world was so profound that no gift or blessing was ever afterward to be taken for granted, but received with joy and gratitude. Indeed, she was to grow up a remarkably balanced young woman, serious and thoughtful (an abiding area of interest was philosophy). But she also loved people, parties, dances, and just having fun. There was much good humor in the Champion household – “Papa is the worse (sic) tease you ever saw...” – and Petra was ebullient.

Lucile’s early education came from the sisters of the Incarnate Word convent school in Brownsville, and with it came an early love of books. I found a scrap of a letter in one of her father’s books, possibly written at eight or nine to a cousin in New Orleans:

What do you do at night? Have you any friends near? When I was there you had not many near, I have been reading some very pretty books I get from the Convent. I pay one dollar a year & I have one every Friday. When I finish reading it I take it back & get another, but I have no time to read during the week untill [sic] Sunday. I close with best regards to all from Papa & myself & many kisses from your loving cousin Lucile.

In 1905, a brief item appeared in the Brownsville Herald:

Quite a party of young folks left Brownsville this morning under the chaperonage of Frank Champion for Kentucky, where they will attend

Nazareth Academy, near Bardstown, in that state, the coming session. The following compose the list: Misses Lucile Champion, Consuela Fernández, Benita Ruiz; Messrs. Ernesto Fernández, David Fernández and Eduardo Ruiz.

Nazareth Academy, a Catholic girls' school was, at its founding in 1814, the only post-elementary school in the U.S. open to females. (the three boys mentioned apparently were to attend a boys' school in the vicinity). Typically, the "academies" of the time did not offer a college degree, but as far back as 1835 Nazareth's "comprehensive course of study" included "Arithmetic, English grammar, geography, history, rhetoric and botany, as well as natural philosophy which included principles of astronomy, optics, chemistry...plain sewing, needlework, drawing and painting, music and French."³

Lucile discovered a special interest in philosophy, and developed her natural talent to excel in drawing and painting, some of which talent I had the great good fortune to inherit. We have a number of her pencil studies of complex still life arrangements which show exceptionally fine draughtsmanship, and her watercolors, a number of which graced the Champion living room, were far beyond a dilettante level. Her readings in philosophy would in time provide food and sustenance for her thoughtful nature. She passed on one of her books to Petra with a page reference on the fly-leaf to a passage from Schopenhauer which in today's culture of "women's lib" would be inflammatory, and which she obviously found ridiculously inane.⁴

The Twentieth Century Comes to Brownsville

Lucile, now twenty-one, measurably matured and broadened in outlook, returned from Nazareth in 1910 to a far different city than the one she had left five years earlier. In 1904 the first rails had finally come to Brownsville, a full twenty-five years after coming to San Antonio and going on west to Laredo and El Paso.

The remote birthplace of the cattle empire was opened to ...development for the first time...The old families sold much of their vast land grants to land companies...networks of canals were dug... Soon orchards of citrus fruits, vegetable farms and cotton plantations drove the... cattle out of what was now called the Magic Valley.⁵

The twentieth century burst full force on the Rio Grande Valley. Men – and women – could fly! Automobiles, no longer the “horseless carriages” of 1905, but commodious, powerful “machines” (Oldsmobiles, Locomobiles and racy two-seater Stutz Bearcats and Mercer Raceabouts) were becoming commonplace, and going for “a spin” was great fun; even if there were few paved roads or streets. Women’s hemlines swooped above their ankles (but showed high-buttoned shoes). Ragtime was the dance sensation, and what’s more, there were movies. In 1910, they were called nickelodeons, little more than a machine into which you put a nickel and peered into in order to see jerky black-and-white images of people performing stunts and amazing feats. There were 10,000 of them in storefronts across the country, so it’s likely Brownsville had at least one. By 1916, movie theatres with first-run feature films and Hollywood stars were part of Brownsville’s cultural life. But it didn’t take long for the dazzle to wear thin: Lucile wrote, “Lill and I went to the Queen this afternoon – the picture was bum...we left and went out for a spin to the country club.”

Lucile’s crowded snapshot album tells us that the young people of the Valley embraced the New Wave with the same gusto with which they attacked the crashing breakers in the Gulf in their daring new bathing suits; the men’s snug-fitting with bare arms and legs, the women’s with color and style, a demure short sleeved blouse top over bloomers just up to their knees. It was a wonderful time and place to be young and they made the most of it.

The bad old days of cattle ranching were fading, but the ranches of the old families were still there, at least in part, and the younger

generation, though mostly town folk, knew and loved the colorful old traditions. Again, the album takes us on “ranch parties” at the Champion ranch, *La Gloria*, and other ranches, such as the Youngs’. The city folks would get into the spirit, wearing ten-gallon hats and bandana neckerchiefs à la movie cowboy William S. Hart. They would ride twenty-five miles or so, some in the open-canopied “ambulances” (a type of stagecoach with a team of four horses or mules). Many of the men and some of the women, including Petra, rode horseback. I remember Tía Petra telling of riding to Albert Champion’s old *Tío Cano* ranch, at least another fifteen miles north.

At the ranch, they would ride horses, try roping calves or goats, shoot at white-wing doves, rabbits, or tin cans on fence posts, and take hundreds of “kodaks” in funny or self-conscious poses. In one snapshot, Lucile, in a stylish casual dress, posed, taking aim in very good form with a rifle, possibly her father’s. The food might well have been that great *Mejicano* favorite, *cabrito*, though most likely, *tamales*.

Back in town, there was always plenty going on, with dances at the country club and the Pavilion, social activities and events at Fort Brown, restaurants and *cantinas* in Matamoros, and (never doubt it with this many young marrieds and unmarrieds) just parties. Auction bridge was the great indoor pastime with women; Lucile and her cousin María Fernández belonged to two (or possibly three) clubs, and they scored well.

The railroad was for Brownsville in 1905 what airlines would be for Americans in 1950 – an open door to the outside world...places like San Antonio, New Orleans, Saint Louis and Chicago, and (for those with the time and the money) even New York. Group outings to these places gave an added dimension. A picture in the album, taken at the Missouri Pacific Station, shows a group of eleven ladies, including Lucile and Petra, in winter overcoats and hats, obviously about to entrain for parts North. Seated on the grass at their feet are six gentlemen, all in suits and ties, except

for one Army officer in uniform. The men are in “Brownsville Winter” attire – no overcoats. My interpretation is that the men – husbands and friends – drove the ladies to the station with their luggage, to see them off. That the occasion warranted hiring a professional photographer tells us just how much of an adventure this could be, especially for unescorted ladies. Lucile makes reference in a letter to a memorable trip to St. Louis in 1913, which would almost certainly fit this picture.

With all this good fun going on, Lucile was not being ignored; at one point she spoke of three young men occupying a good deal of her time. Two were members of “the crowd,” with lots of good times but nothing serious. And then there was George – George Murphy, no less, but no relation of the Murphy whose name she would eventually bear. George was a very impressive young man; handsome, impeccably tailored, obviously affluent and self-assured, and – regarding Lucile – very serious. Much to George’s dismay, the lights just didn’t go on for Lucile. Nevertheless, she cared enough for him that she was unable to hurt him by flatly putting him down, so that he remained her ardent suitor until she announced her engagement in 1917.

On March 16, 1916, an out-of-control Mexican general named Pancho Villa raided a U.S. border town in New Mexico, killing seventeen U.S. citizens and setting off a chain of events that would have momentous effects on Brownsville and many of its citizens. President Wilson dispatched an expedition under the command of General Pershing to pursue Villa into Mexico. Pershing’s regular army force was backed by a massive mobilization of U.S. forces, mainly National Guard units, along the Mexican border. The bulk of the Guard troops sent to the border were from eastern and mid-western states. At Brownsville, there were units of regimental strength from New York, Virginia, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa – thousands of men in vast encampments spreading for miles around the city, starting at Point Isabel and arcing far to the north and west of the city.

To say the least, it was the talk of the town; the citizenry of this historic army town was enthralled at being immersed in an international event of such portent. Everyone who could arrange transport was out to witness the spectacle. George Murphy for sure had transport – in a brand new Oldsmobile touring car – and wasted no time in taking Lucile for a late afternoon spin to see the sights. Sights indeed...little did he know! The sweat-soaked, blistered and dust-caked troops had come in from a day of maneuvers in the thorny chaparral, and as George and Lucile proceeded up one of the company streets they suddenly found themselves in the midst of hundreds of gleaming-white, bronze-faced naked men, happily showering under a vast framework of overhead sprinklers all the way up the street. Red-faced George decided not to try a u-turn on the narrow street, so he stepped on the gas for what must have seemed the longest trip he'd ever made, only to come to a dead end. There was nothing to do but to turn around and go back for a repeat performance, to the cheers and whistles of the defenders of the nation. As novel a sight as it was for convent-raised Lucile, she had to have been convulsed by the hilarious absurdity of Georges's predicament. And then, as they drove up to her door, to keep a straight face as she thanked him for a lovely spin.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the "Guard" officer corps typically came from prominent families of small towns and cities throughout America – something of a social cachet for young blades just out of college. One such officer, of some twelve-or-more-years service, was Captain Edward Andrews Murphy of Vinton, Iowa, Regimental Adjutant of the First Iowa Infantry. The units were often inheritors of great traditions and had an aura of glamour; the "Richmond Blues" for example. It seems that the Guard units had hardly set up camp in Brownsville before an incessant round of dances and social events was under way at the post, country club, pavilion, etc., sponsored by the units themselves as well as local civic and social organizations. The eligible young ladies of Brownsville could barely catch their breath for the last six months of 1916.

At one of these affairs, in early autumn when the sub-tropical evenings on the Rio Grande are still warm and flower-scented, Captain Murphy, thirty-seven, in his starched, high-collared khakis and polished boots, encountered the vision of Miss Lucile Champion, twenty-seven, no doubt ethereal in organdy or whatever was the fashion that year. It would seem that when their eyes met it was pretty much *fete accompli*. They made a handsome couple; he was tall, about six feet, and trim, with brown eyes that twinkled with understanding and a gentle good humor. Not movie-star looks, but, once, watching a Maurice Chevalier movie, I was struck by an almost startling resemblance, even to the manner and the savoir-faire. Lucile was of at least average height, five foot six or over, of ideal proportions with dark brown hair and soft brown eyes of unusual depth and sensitivity.

But there was more, much more, that enthralled and beguiled the romantic Iowan. Her beauty was not exotic in the Latin context, yet it had an arresting quality of softness, femininity, strength and breeding that made her different from any woman he had ever met. The combination of Northern Italian, Spanish, English, and French blood he could not possibly have imagined, but there was definitely *something* about this girl! Her style, personality, intelligence and humor were irresistible.

Edward's proposal, rapturously accepted, probably took place sometime in November, but the engagement was not to be formalized and announced quite so fast: Frank Champion felt his world was collapsing. After all, who was this man, ten years older than Lucile, from some unheard of place in Iowa? Inquiries to the Army Command and the bank brought glowing commendations, but more was needed; Frank demanded letters of reference from three substantial, well-placed sources before approval would be given. At the same time, Edward's father Bernard, editor and publisher of *The Vinton Eagle* and prominent in Iowa politics, at age sixty-nine was in seriously deteriorating health and in urgent need of Edward's help by resuming management of the newspaper.

Coincidentally, as adjutant of his Iowa National Guard regiment, he was ordered to return to Fort Des Moines and set up mustering-out procedures at for the return of the troops. He would leave on December first, but meanwhile they would proceed with wedding plans for early 1917. Since they could not announce their engagement, they agreed it would be kept secret, and Lucile would remain every bit the single girl in the Brownsville social whirl, with, for Lucile, some amusing results. They wrote each other daily, totaling some 165 letters. For Lucile especially, her thoughts and descriptions of the day's events tumbled onto the pages with humor, delight, and some concerns, taking us into both her life and the daily life of Brownsville during an effervescent two months:

Friday Night Dec 1: ...Goodness Dear how awful it all seems without you!.....I'm all "dolled up" and waiting for Mr. James wish I never had made the engagement cause I'm tired and lonesome...Each turn of those old train wheels you are going further and further away from me.....Van called up... and said he had to take care of the 1st Regiment girls – If he only knew that I am sure enough one – Well here's the famous Mr. James now so dearest Good night – I am lonesome and miss you horribly...

Saturday 5 p.m. ...I had a real good time at the dance last night considering you were gone. The music was an Iowa orchestra - the best I've heard in years...my feet began killing me...and I had to tell Mr. James to bring me home. Opie and Gilkison both... teased me about your leaving and I at a dance. Of course I was very indifferent. Lt. Gilkison said it was surely funny every time he came you were here. I said you thought the same he said "No sir, Opie & I compared notes & we know". I haven't a date tomorrow night and I am really glad.

Sunday Dec. 3:Well I went to the dance last night with Van and had a dandy good time...Van was awfully sweet and I like him real well. He said he didn't believe you'd be back...Some Iowa officer, 1st Regiment, he told me his name but I forgot, asked Van who was the lady with him... when he was told he said "oh, Miss Champion, that's Murph's girl I've heard so much about her I want you to take me over to meet her" but Van said he made an excuse 'cause he can't dance and he knew he'd ask me... Lt. Glass 3rd Cavalry, came in from up the Valley last night & dropped in for a minute... to ask me to save him a couple of dances & he said it was all over town I was engaged to a Virginia officer. I insisted he was terribly much mistaken and he was, wasn't he dearest?.....

Monday, Dec 4: ...I was forgetting to tell you, while we were at Youngs' this afternoon a moving picture man came along who has been taking moving pictures of the Valley for Pathe' [the newsreel company]...and took all of us walking around the grounds so you all may get to see me up there in 30 days he said. I bet I'm wonderful – as I take such beautiful pictures all the time ...Lill and I are going over to María's with two of the Virginia men Company L Wednesday ...to dance by the Victrola and Friday I have a date with another of those fellows – see as soon as you left I started getting a "private" rush...

As many young women as there were in her social circle (literally scores), Lucile's closest day-to-day companions were invariably within the family. First cousin María Fernández, close to Lucile in age, was the daughter of *Tía* Panchita Fernández. Lucile and María grew up together and were constant chums. Lill – Lillian Champion – a more distant cousin (a granddaughter of Albert

Champion's brother Peter) was a few years younger than Lucile, but attended Nazareth at the same time. Lill was a very pretty, high spirited twenty-something enjoying an affinity to military uniforms. Living up the Valley in the little town of Donna, she acquired some renown as the Belle O' Donna. One of the uniforms that caught her eye later was said to have been worn by a young flying officer from San Antonio named James Doolittle, who responded to her attention by performing loops, barrel-rolls, etc. over her house. Lill spent considerable periods with Lucile in Brownsville to make the most of the social opportunities.

Tuesday, Dec. 6: My own dearest, I have made a dozen attempts to write you tonight and here it is all hours and I haven't yet done it. María and the other girls came in ...and you know when we get to talking it's all off...

Thursday, Dec. 7:with my ankle in such a fix if I'm down stairs I can't go up or if up I can't come down – It's still pretty swollen and stiff...Capt. McCoy is giving a dinner this evening out at the country club for General Parker's daughter [married] and insists that I go even if I don't dance – so I've accepted and will be a perfect stick every body dancing between courses and after wards and I sitting around with the old married "sticky" folks. ... I wrote Grand-mother Edwards last night [Elizabeth Dupree Edwards, living in Santa María, near the Champion ranch.] I felt guilty keeping it [the engagement] from her and I can hardly wait to hear what she has to say about it.

Friday Night Dec 8:I started on the invitation list to-day only got as far as my school friends and a few of my numerous relatives and I have 115 already...I was out in a machine all afternoon and the folks gave me fits because it's awfully cold and

my ankle is not much better for it.....I was forgetting to tell you of the party last night. Lt. Newman 3rd Cavalry took me – It was really a wonderfully nice dinner party and they were all awfully nice to me – Capt. McCoy insisted I dance with him at least once so I did a couple of times and Raborg and McGuire saved me from being a real stick... Capt. McCoy wanted to bring me home but Raborg told him I had already promised I would come with Newman and himself so we all crammed in Lt. Newman's little [two-seater] runabout so see! Better come back and take care of me just where you belong – “Deedy”.

For all the relentless whirl of military glamour and youthful effervescence, the grim possibility of American entry into a terrible war underlay the days as a gray presence that could not be ignored. Lucile, in the rapture of love, was determined that Edward not go to war; she insisted that, at the age of thirty eight and after fifteen years of service, it was not unreasonable that he should resign his commission. Also, there was the matter of his father's health and the need for him to carry on the family business.

Saturday Dec.9: Dearest Mine.....I am so glad your father is so much better and that you have sent in your resignation – now that the regiment is going home...Dear, it's the funniest thing every time I say something before Papa about getting married etc - he says I'm in too much hurry... Goodness! I'm tickled I've not a date to-night and in fact none in sight – María came over and spent the afternoon and embroidered and “whipped” lace [for her trousseau]... I have to sit on one chair with my foot on another with the hot water bag on it...oh dearest what do you think George [Murphy] said to María at the Charity dance - he asked where I was & said

well I hear she's to marry Capt. Murphy very soon – well I surely am glad because he's a dandy fellow & a very good friend of mine. María said she really didn't know about it & he said I got it from awfully good source & that's why I'm taking her to the 31st [New Year's Eve dance] because it will be her last party & I want to take her – Now, what do you think of that?

As spacious as the Champion house was, with seven adults, a servant in residence, and (as has been noted) occasional house guests, La Gloria ranch was a welcome getaway for the family; Frank, Petra, and the three *tías* - generally two at a time – would go for a week or so. It was loved by them all. There had never been a phone at La Gloria, which served it even better - the U.S. Mail had always been fast enough.

Sunday Dec 10: Sunday is a dreadfully long day – I never get a letter from you because they get here on the afternoon train and they don't distribute it until tonight. [The Champion house was a block from the post office so they had a box] ...a letter from Petra [at the ranch] today and she says she was in the yard and saw three White-wings flying by & shot at them and all three dropped with the one shot, just then a machine was passing with two officers & ladies and they asked to be shown thro' the garden. Petra said she gave them all the roses and oranges they could carry....And you never did go to La Gloria, when you come again Helen [Edward's sister] and all of us will go out for a day.The Richmond Blues are giving a big dance at the Country Club Tuesday...Mrs. McDavett is giving a tea so the fellows can meet the girls and make their dates – Lill is going with María – I'm invited but...I'm not crazy about going.....P.S. George

Murphy has just this minute phoned up. He wants to come over tonight. Of course I was "delighted" – He thinks he'll look into these rumors I guess –

Sunday Night Dec. 10...Lill went to the tea. ... said a number of the fellows asked where her sister was meaning me and that the man who drew me was real cute ...I got the cutest letter from one of my cousins in Orizaba Mexico – she is the cutest prettiest little blond Spanish girl I ever saw, educated here in the states – in Ky. And writes the funniest letters – She was to be married this year but says she decided to break off the engagement and wait a while – Imagine - She was to marry a very wealthy Spaniard –She says, "who are you loving these days – when you decide to get married let me know because I haven't forgotten the box of Spanish laces I promised you" – Imagine, if I tell her she could not any more keep a secret she'd tell my aunts and other cousins in Vera Cruz and it would get...here sure. So I'm pondering what to do as you know I haven't been able to get any laces from Mexico at all and none here, and they are wonderful. ... I'm wearing your frat pin to-night suppose George will "rest" his eyes on it and make a few personal questions...

Wednesday, Dec. 13....Papa is the worse tease I ever saw – To-night when I was reading your letter, just about half way the lights went out – every body was at supper but me - I started fussing with the lights and Papa just nearly died laughing but got the girl to take a candle to me right away... Lill didn't leave although she had her bag packed but María phoned her the Virginians were going to have a parade and do you believe, she staid over just for that! [P.S.] I got a printed invite...Iowa en-

gineers to a dance Friday night – They have some of the best people in town to chaperone. So see I am not entirely a wall flower – All my love, dear – L

Thursday, Dec. 14...The first troops entrained [for home] today – they were the happiest bunch I ever saw cheering and singing as the trucks went by... I am going down to Willmon's drug store to sell tuberculosis stamps – I go every year to those little stamps stands – It's a good cause tho I'm busy as can be...

Friday Night, Dec. 15 ...I am so glad dearest you had such a nice time at the stag party. You weren't very lucky were you? But then lucky in love you know. Papa went to a little party of the kind tonight...Geo. Murphy and Albert [Fernández, María's brother] I don't know who else...dear old Grandmother's [Solís] birthday on the 26th. She will be 87 years old imagine - So Helen thought you'd better not be exhibiting my picture on your desk – Well, she's right because folks would wonder unless you've had a collection of girls out before – I have a pretty good collection, myself. I'll have to have a barn fire [sic] before our wedding – wish you could be here to sit and watch “the pretty flames” go up and hear the interesting tales about each and every one... [P.S] I've had to scratch half of this out... there's an awful bunch of relatives in this room and all talking at once...

Sunday Night, Dec. 17...I've been writing letters all afternoon telling our wonderful secret and afterwards went over to Mrs.Celaya my cousin and Godmother...we thought I'd better tell her – her husband said to me when's the great event coming off – He said it was all over town & he had been

asked but said he knew nothing ...she gave me a few pieces of Spanish lace she had saved...You are adorable dear to send me a Christmas tree – a sure enough pine tree! Won't it be grand?

Monday Night Dec.18...My own Dearest, I've been spoiled to death in the last two days dear I got your Saturday letter Sunday morning your special delivery in the afternoon another one last night... and the darling little Christmas tree ...the sweetest letters.....a Mr. Murrel, Company L 1stVa....called to say it has just been posted down town where the 1st Va and some more of the Iowa are leaving maybe this week – Carter Glass, Senator Glass's [a prominent Virginia Senator] son, a Company L man got a telegram from his father to-day saying they would have him home for Xmas dinner..... Dearest, the name of the song is "They Didn't Believe Me". It's a peach isn't it? And it suits us fine.

Tuesday, Dec. 19: You know I came very near having an awful accident yesterday – I was going to press something with the electric iron and there must have been a defect in the iron 'cause it gave me a shock & blazed up almost burnt me – and the awful scare it gave me – I ran out side to disconnect the light out on the porch [wall outlets were uncommon at that time, so the iron could have been plugged into a ceiling fixture on the second floor porch.] and it burned out the fuse so I saved the family a dollar by changing them like you told me that night...I was invited to another Richmond Blues dance Friday but it's still Advent so I regretted... [Clipping enclosed of troops leaving]

Thursday, 6 P.M., Dec. 21: Dearest Mine I'm writing early tonight because I am going over to

Dreamland Theatre to “preside” over a drum – you know they always serve the poor of the city a Xmas dinner and besides the collection they have girls at different picture shows P.O. & hotel and every body that wants drops money in these drums. I’m not a bit crazy about going to-night because it’s dreadfully cold and my ankle is not any too well but it’s such a good thing and I hate to refuse when asked. ...I got the box of Holly this afternoon Lover and it is perfectly beautiful and just as fresh as could be...

Friday Night Dec. 22...The folks have been busy baking cakes and all kinds of goodies for Xmas...I always send Grandmother Edwards a Xmas box she lives out in one of these little one horse towns [Santa María] and it’s hard to get things so I send her a real nice box...I have a good one to tell you – Paula, our servant girl – told us she was to be married in March – we have had her for years you know and she’s perfectly splendid I pity the folks after she leaves –I told her I was going to get married too & showed her my ring...she said my fellow has given me two rings but I only wear one like a wedding ring. She said I bet you are going to marry that “soldier” who was here so often – but he’s awfully old, she said – mine’s only twenty-four...She teases me every time she bakes or makes anything special she calls me to watch her so I can learn, she said she surely did feel sorry for you ‘cause I didn’t know how to cook a thing – She’s a joul [sic] I’d give anything to take her up to Iowa with me but she wouldn’t leave for a world...

Tuesday Night Dec. 26...Tia Panchita has just come in with a Victrola for Grandmother [Estefania Solís Champion]...they brought it in tonight for her birthday. Grandmother, poor soul [she was 87 and

blind] is crazy about music & enjoys it so much... is so perfectly well & happy... she speaks of you every day & says even if she can't see you she felt your hand & she loves you already.

Saturday Night Dec. 29 ...Papa was asking me last night to write you about his clothes for an afternoon wedding...Yes, ...fellows wear silk hats here to all the big dances in the winter so be sure to bring it along...Lil is sitting here waiting for her fellow to go to the fancy dress ball at the pavilion she is going to wear my Yama Yama costume – it was awfully cute & I bet she'll look dear in it...

Tuesday Night, Jan. 2, 1917... My Lover, it's all over [the engagement announcement party] and a perfect success in every way dear – your grand sweet telegram got here just as I had finished announcing it...[to the bridge club] Well they certainly were a surprised bunch of girls dear – they all kissed me & wished me all kinds of happiness...they made me bring your picture down to show them and showered me with questions but Mrs.[deleted] she's the limit one of these jealous kind dear - You know she had the "crust" to ask one of the Fernández if you weren't an Atheist – but she's the only brainless one and I surely consider the source...

Tuesday, January 9... Capt. Marr a new one from the 4th awfully nice man just called me up & wanted me to go over to the lake at the post [Fort Brown] to see a big Water Carnival. They are having real Venetians operating the fancy gondolas etc. & have two bands on the water - I couldn't accept because folks would see me out with him and they never would stop talking about me – so Aunt Rosa & I are going in a minute...P.S. As Tia Rosa and I were

leaving Papa came in and we got a machine and went out – It surely was lovely dozens of little boats with Jack-O-Lanterns & all kinds of fire works – afterwards Papa said we should take a little machine ride because he says I am in the house too much & need fresh air. The night is wonderful just like a summer night – I have a summer dress on & feel perfectly comfortable - & the moon – goodness! It makes me sick you can't be here for they are nights to love...

Wednesday, Jan. 10...My own Lover, your wonderful letter... this afternoon was certainly a life-saver – for I was in the midst of a sure enough good cry...a million things went wrong...the sewing woman making my house dresses had ruined a crocheted yoke...someone else phoned... she said I could never get my wedding dress made by this lady in New Orleans 'cause it takes her awfully long... you have to order two months ahead & she made such lovely ones for girls here & everybody pulling me around to see about a dozen other things...I have to laugh at myself now – I went in the closet & closed the door & had a sure enough good cry & then felt much better...

That was a sort of a funny editorial. [Edward had sent a newspaper clipping from a local Iowa paper, The Cedar Rapids Republican, re. his engagement that ran: "Edward A. Murphy of Vinton, regimental adjutant for the First regiment, has improved his stay in the south and will bring home a bride from Brownsville. But Mr. Murphy did not make the mistake a Fort Dodge man did, but he will marry a woman of his own race and rank, a good sensible girl who has been to school and who is said to be a charming young woman."⁶] What did they mean

when they said I was of your race & had gone to school? Do they think all of us down here are uneducated people – unless some one of the Iowa men... married a common person– I know Northern people think we down here are all wild “horney”...and goodness knows what all – at Nazareth some of the girls really thought that....

What do you think ...if you wouldn't kill yourself laughing if you could see us – Grandmother has retired, Tia Rosa, Petra, Manuela the small servant girl & myself are all in this [Grandmother's] room waiting for Daddie to get home. The girl was upstairs in her room in bed & came running down to tell us she heard some body up in Papa's room & now we are all scared to move out of here – it's all so ridiculous – but such a bunch of cowards...

Monday night Jan. 15... we had an awfully nice day and quite a nice dinner for María, her birthday. I had a real sweet camisole for her and Petra got up early & cut the grandest bunch of roses & ferns & put them on her pillow when she woke up – We all sewed and they embroidered and went to a matinee to see Mary Pickford in “Lesser Than Dust”. It was fine – Papa Tia Rosa Grandmother & I are here by the fire talking wedding wedding wedding – honestly dear you don't hear another thing in this house. I think three maybe four of my cousins from Luling will be here besides Marie [Schatzman, her friend from St.Louis], Helen [Murphy], Grandma Edwards & Lillie and it surely will be fun I love a crowd so much excitement - but as you say lover we'll have our hands full trying to get away from this bunch...I am awfully glad you wrote for the drawing room [on the train] and your room at the Miller – I died laughing at your idea of the rooms

at the back of the house [courtyard service rooms from the old original house] - one room is a wood shed one for laundry another for the ferns & the last is an old junk room...Petra is going to tease the life out of you about suggesting the back house.

Thursday, Jan. 18...I have decided to go to San Antonio this afternoon with Petra...because there are dozens of little things yet to get, especially shoes which are almost an impossibility here...to get shoes gloves & hat to match...

Friday, Jan. 19, Hotel Lanier, San Antonio...My own Lover, it's eight o'clock [p.m.] and we just got to our room - we didn't know if we were to have a "roof over our heads" for the night - we got in at six forty five [a.m.] and went to the Gunter not a room for love or money and we tried the St. Anthony, Menger and all were full...the fellow at the Gunter sent us here [Lanier] a very small place just opened last week...by the price [room with bath \$1.50] we didn't know what to expect...you can't imagine how perfectly lovely and clean everything is. ...We came on this big excursion the New York Cavalry & Texas Militia are having a big base ball game tomorrow. We got return tickets for seven dollars just imagine and got things just as we wanted...[little did they know, the "excursion" wasn't over]...shopped all the blessed day without even sitting down except to eat. I could not even keep my shoes on much less go to a show as we had planned....But I got my coat suit ...it's the new sand color and a peach I think - Gray is so "bridey" I was afraid...and a darling little afternoon dress, lavender and green silk...P.S. There's the dearest little sitting room right next door & there's a girl playing the

piano wonderfully, just rags – she’s playing “And when I tell them” etc. etc. - don’t you love it?

Brownsville, Sunday, Jan. 21, 5:30 p.m....My own...I don’t have to tell you how I felt when I got home at one o’clock this afternoon and got your three wonderful letters...

We went to the Pullman about nine-thirty and went right to bed. I fell asleep almost immediately but after the train started a Captain & three N.Y. soldiers came in. The Capt. had the upper above us [every berth was taken] and the others also in uppers... and they were all terribly drunk & talked & carried on & they asked the [porter] to bring a bottle out of their bag and started drinking more & then they told him to put out the lights & we were all left in utter darkness – I was scared so I didn’t want to breathe – you can imagine – and the funny part was that Petra would say to me don’t whisper so they won’t find out we are women and we both forgot our four shoes were right in front of our berth [the custom in Pullman travel was for passengers to leave their shoes in the aisle for the porter to clean and shine, for which he was given a tip as the passenger departed.] – Finally they had the lights on again and I went to sleep I was so dead tired – but I was so awfully hot I slipped the comfort off & it got cold later & I never woke up and now I have an awful cold.

January 22, 1917...There’s the prettiest Mexican string band playing here at [our] gate – you know when you get back from a trip they come serenade & you are suppose to pay them – It’s awfully sweet...

Another bunch of “cousins” have come in and I can’t think with so much talking and laughing. ..

I'm down here in Grand Mother's room because there's a big fire in here [the house like so many in the far South did not have central heating, but there were several fire places.] Lill has [military] company in the library [another fireplace]...

January 23, 1917... Daddie told me yesterday – He has three awfully nice lots in West B'ville and he told me if you wanted to build cottages for rent he would let us have them...if you think it would be a good investment...imagine people here pay thirty-five and forty dollars a month for six room cottages and can't find one for love or money...

Jan. 25...Anita Fernández Ruiz, María's married sister who lives in Madrid sent Grandmother some Spanish sausage packed in cans – I'll try and save some so you can get a little taste when you get here – they pierced the can on the way I guess they thought it was gun powder – I always remind the family that she went much further than I'm going.

Jan 26... This morning Mrs. Dr. Wright from the 3rd Cavalry at the fort phoned that she wanted to have a little luncheon for me today – just María Fernández, Dr. and herself besides me . Dr. Wright & I were real good friends before he married but he was really crazy about María...It was lovely, she has wonderful silver service – and had an oyster cocktail – ducks and two vegetables a salad & coffee...They have just been married a little over a year...No doubt you met Dr. Wright...

I was not at home all day, to Wright's at one then went out for a little spin with María & her sisters, we met Gay [an old beau] & he asked himself to go with us to see the parade all three in the front seat & he just ruined my new dress mused it all up –

I teased him because I was telling him something about one of María's fellows & winked at him under my hat [excuse me this time dear]??? & every time I'd do it he would look the opposite way so I said well you are honest, won't fool with mortgaged girls – I told him I would tell you...

Father Frigón came over to talk about the dispensation [for a mixed marriage] - he says he has to write the Bishop for it... & he expects to have some trouble because the Champions are all Catholics and the Bishop knows it and will have a fit about it. Some girl here who is to marry the 30th & they have tried for dispensation too & it hasn't been granted yet – the girl was in tears this morning – and you know they can't marry us if we don't get it – wouldn't that be dreadful? but I hope Father [Frigón] being such a grand friend of Dad's can fix it all right.

Monday Jan. 29 / 17... Julia Browne [Next door neighbors... Mr. Browne, a boyhood pal of Frank Champion had been Mayor of Brownsville] was here to get Petra's help pairing the couples for the party she's giving me... she wants it to be a surprise but I made Petra tell me. They are going to arrange with Dreamland to have a good picture for the night... & she's to have a box party then we go to the Country Club & we'll have a buffet lunch & she's going to have a band and we'll dance until twelve. She's ordering red roses & is going to give the girls corsages... and I don't know what for the men...

Saturday Feb. 3 / 17... What do you know... I went over to Youngs this afternoon to be in a movie – There's an Iowa man who is taking this – the name of

the picture is "A Mexican Border Romance" Sarah Young is the heroine & one of the Iowa Militia men is the hero – She takes the part of the Southern girl & her sister Una of the Northern girl. The boy leaves for the border & she's heartbroken & tells him not to dare falling in love with a Southern girl & he rescues Sarah when she's drowning & he falls in love with her & marries her – Sarah told the man that I should have taken that part 'cause I had a sure enough romance & he said are you to marry one of our boys – that's fine he got a Southern girl...said I'd love the north - & said this film would be shown in Des Moines in two weeks then it's coming down here & will go to Iowa again – I surely hope they get it in Vinton & I will have a box party to show them something of our homes, etc.....

...I nearly fainted when I got [my shoes] in San Antonio three pair at a time - poor Daddie I know he's up to his ears but he's the most wonderful father on earth – says get the best of everything...

Sunday night Feb. 4 / 17...I can't realize that I have only one more letter to write you [before Edward would leave for Brownsville] – I came very near wiring you this afternoon because the papers here having extras about the German relations & the mobilization of militia & I am most worried to death for fear you haven't gotten your resignation & you'll have to go too – Surely you'd wire me if you feared there would really be trouble - wouldn't that be really terrible? You might not even get time to come down here & marry me – what on earth would we do?

The Wedding

All dire portents notwithstanding, Lucile's wedding gown did arrive on time, Father Frigón worked his magic with the bishop, and dispensation was given, Edward's resignation was accepted, and the United States had not declared war, so on the afternoon of February 20, 1917, at the Frank Champion residence on Washington Street, Brownsville, Texas, Lucile Elizabeth Champion and Edward Andrews Murphy were joined in Holy Matrimony.. How many of the hundreds of invited guests were in attendance is not recorded. Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, with suitcases, grips and steamer trunks departed on the evening train for a leisurely honeymoon trip to Vinton, Iowa.

When Lucile and Edward alighted on the platform of the train station at Vinton, it could have been for Lucile just a bit of a letdown, in the cold light of late midwest February; with the wide main street – as chance would have it, Washington Street – lined by bare brick buildings and cast-stone storefronts, surrounded by the hundreds of white and pale yellow clapboard houses among the huge black skeletons of trees. But the stars were still in her eyes, and the little cluster of shining faces that immediately surrounded and embraced her gave her bright promise that her dreams were coming true. There had been warm, affectionate letters exchanged between Lucile and Edward's mother and his two sisters: Louise (four years older than Edward) and Helen (eight years younger and closest to Lucile's age, who had been a bridesmaid for Lucile), so that the meeting was, more than a welcome, a long-anticipated union.

In one sense, that of socio-economics, there were striking unities. Both families were in the second and third generations of immigrant pioneers. Bernard Murphy, affectionately nicknamed "Pat", came penniless from the farm with a one-room school education, but (as with the Champion brothers) with a vigorous entrepreneurial spirit. Apprenticed as the "printer's devil" to the *Vinton Eagle*, he moved up through this and some other papers including

the *Des Moines Register*; co-founded the *Traer Clipper*; and in nine years was part owner of his beloved *Eagle*, eventually becoming its full owner, editor and publisher. Again as with the *Champions*, he was active in civic affairs. Ever mindful of his educational deficiency, he gave years of unsparing effort as a member of the Iowa Better Schools Commission. He saw to it that all of his children received college degrees, and he became an active and influential force in Iowa politics. Both families had, in a relatively short time, achieved standing at the upper levels of their respective communities.

Her Nazareth years notwithstanding, Lucile's impression of northern culture seems to have been one of dignified austerity. However much or little Edward had told Lucile about his father, it seems that she was apprehensive of a crusty, humorless old patriarch with a walrus moustache and gold watch chain. In her January 11 letter to Edward she worried about how she apparently imagined such men in the cold, dark, austere North:

I wish I could have been peaking [sic] at the dinner given you at the Des Moines Club to have heard you talk in public Lover - I'm afraid ...I would jump up and throw my arms around your neck & disgrace myself - I'm so glad Father enjoyed [it] & was so well - Do you reckon he is going to think me awfully silly & foolish? I'll be real nice before him tho & dignified - can't jump on a chair & sit on my foot like I do here - he'll think you married some poor light headed thing.

We can hope she came to know the twinkle in his Irish eyes and his rollicking laughter in the following year...he would pass away on February 28, 1918.

The love-birds would move into a rented house. Edward had spent all the time he could spare from his work to find and purchase a home, with no luck, but it turned out that a very nice house

was available for rent across the street from his folks, possibly even nicer than theirs. Glorious Iowa springtime soon burst upon Lucile, appropriately bringing stirrings of life deep within through the bounteous summer and mellow, radiant fall. Edward Andrews Murphy, Junior, was born on December 19, 1917. Lucile had talked about having her father visit them in Vinton after they were settled, but now, that would not do; now, everyone, all the family, all of Brownsville, must see and admire her priceless blessing. Besides, for all the rapture of their first year together and the endearing embrace of her new family, she was, plain and simple, homesick.

They didn't waste any time. An album has a flurry of "kodaks" of five-month-old Edward Jr. waving an American flag in the arms of towering grandfather Champion; held in the arms of his 89-year old great-grandmother Champion, and on and on. But this was only the beginning. I, Frank Champion Murphy, arrived in Vinton in 1920, and our sister Elizabeth also born in Iowa in 1923. It's likely that we got the same treatment, except for a very sad difference; Mother's adored Daddie, Frank Champion, passed away in 1919, at age 65. Frank's mother, Estefania, lived until 1922, when she was 94.

Lucile and Edward couldn't realize then that a precedent had been established. Throughout their marriage, Mother brought us kids almost yearly for visits to her beloved Brownsville. From the time we started school in the 1920s into the 1930s, we stayed for our entire summer vacation. This did not in any way imply a failure of their marriage; it was, to the contrary, proof of complete, total love and devotion. Dad loved Brownsville and the Champion family because they were who his Lucile was, and he wanted this heritage to be given to us in all its unique, wonderful aspects.

But it was not to be so easy. Dad, the son of a pioneering Iowa newspaper editor and publisher, was born (as they said) with printer's ink in his veins. His dream was to create a statewide publication called the *Iowa Magazine*, which would be syndicated and

carried as a supplement by local newspapers throughout the state. When I was a journalism student at Iowa State in 1942, the college press foreman, Mr. Holmes, told me he had been with the *Des Moines Register* when Dad was struggling with the magazine, and sadly shook his head; "It was," he told me, "far ahead of its time." Even with his experience in the business of newspaper publishing, Dad was unprepared for the cost of launching a publication on this scale. A few issues did get into print, but advertising and syndication take time to develop, and in the meantime the production costs continued without letup.

Out of money and in debt, there was no alternative; The *Iowa Magazine* shut down and we moved to Chicago. But the times were uncertain, with few good employment opportunities. In such times, life insurance fills a need, and Dad made a good connection selling for Equitable, a major New York firm. Edward's and Lucile's world had changed from dreams to hard realities. We moved into an apartment building in Oak Park, a pleasant suburb on the west edge of the city. Dad took the "L" into the city every morning and Mother herded her little brood back and forth to school, the store, carried the groceries up three floors and did all the housework. For all this, their love and devotion never faltered; a cross or angry word was never heard that I remember, ever. It got much worse when we entered the Depression. They both scrimped and deprived themselves in ways we never knew, but it was almost always possible, somehow, for Mother and the three of us to take the train to Brownsville for the summer.

But no matter what our difficulties, there were always in her thoughts others whose need was greater. At Christmas, she took us to Woolworth's and gave us each a dollar to buy presents for our little Martínez playmates (at La Gloria). With nothing over ten cents, toy soldiers a nickel, cannons and trucks and cars dolls and doll clothes and dishes a dime or less, we made up a nice gift box. Mother of course made up boxes of canned food, cookies and candy, and clothing.

The handsome house that presided so self-assuredly over the northeast corner of Tenth and Washington Streets was the only home we knew in Brownsville, but it was not the only Champion home to occupy that spot. Mother's grandparents, Albert and Estefania Champion, whose Point Isabel home was confiscated by Union troops during the Civil War, moved to Brownsville, purchased the Washington Street property and built a brick home in the traditional Spanish style, flush to the street, windows covered with iron grillwork and surrounding a courtyard planted with lush tropical plants.

When Albert, the patriarch of the Champion family, died in 1890, his son, Frank, was apparently logical heir to the property. In his household there was Frank's mother, Estefania, Frank with his young wife Henrietta and their one-year-old daughter Lucile, his three younger maiden sisters – the three Tías – and at some point his young cousin Petra Champion. So it was a houseful. Fortunately, at age thirty-six Frank's fortunes as a mercantile agent were apparently ample, and he replaced the aged, out-dated "cloister" with a spacious modern residence in the American Colonial Revival style. Of a pale yellow brick with white wood trim and detail, it had two stories under broad sloping hip roofs. The front entrance, with its broad flight of steps, faced west onto Washington Street under a wide veranda supported by double and triple columns, sweeping on around the Tenth Street side with a side door opening from the dining room. This was the entrance we commonly used, and this part of the veranda with its comfortable porch furniture was our outdoor living room. Facing the Champion house across Washington Street was the imposing stone-and-stained-glass façade of the Methodist church, with its wide entrance at the top of a broad stairway. The two buildings could be said to form a gateway to residential Washington Street, reaching northwest to Palm Boulevard.

Now, in the earliest Brownsville years (the three young Murphys would remember), there would be but four Champion family members at home on Washington Street: the three tías – Lucile's

“mothers” – and Petra, her “sister”, who was my dotting Godmother. The tías were to become the quiet, undeviating heartbeat of the house, insuring that each day would progress with certainty just like the one before. They would leave the house before six a.m. with their black lace head-shawls and rosaries and walk through the Market Plaza to the old Immaculate Conception Church, the strident clanging bell announcing early Mass. On the way back, they stopped at the open market stalls along the sunny east wall of the Plaza to buy the fresh food for the day, sometimes including a live hen to put in the chicken yard behind the house to fatten up on shelled corn for Sunday dinner. Inside the grand front entrance on the plaza was the meat market, great, cool and spacious, sawdust covering the floor, with quarters of beef and bare white pork, lamb or *chivo* carcasses hanging high from the ceiling behind the counter. The morning’s yield of eggs was gathered from the hen house nests to be served with the *pan dulce* from the market. In season a treat would be fresh figs from the big tree in the courtyard.

Mid-morning, the tías spent sewing, mending, some gardening or reading. The maid had a small pleasant room at the end of the hall upstairs. She was always a young Mexican from Matamoros. Since in the Champion household these girls did not have to understand or speak English, they would generally work harder for less and take orders better from these señoritas who spoke Spanish in such refined accents. She did the laundry, the kitchen drudgery, and helped the tías with the cooking.

The noon meal was dinner, the main meal, after which all the women, the younger children and even some of the men retired to their rooms for *siesta*. The afternoon sea breeze, carrying great white cumulous clouds like a fleet of galleons, would come in from the Gulf, flowing through the open windows, through the wide upstairs hall and the high-ceilinged bedrooms. Sometime around three, bathed and powdered and in their “afternoon dresses”, they were ready for whatever social activity might be at hand. Often three or four more women and an occasional man, almost all family – brothers, sisters, nieces or nephews – would drop in. They’d

sit in the living room, all talking with great animation in Spanish and English simultaneously, punctuated with exclamations of “¡Válgame Dios!” and “¡Mira, no mas!” As Lucile had said so often, while trying to write a letter, “When they get going, it’s all off!”

A frequent treat would be for the *tías*’ favorite nephew, Albert Fernández, brother of Mother’s cousin María and president of the First National Bank, to come by and take us for a spin. Often it would be to Fort Brown, past the officers’ large white homes facing the parade ground, and on out around the cool palm-fringed *resacas* near the Rio Grande, with blue shadows in the golden late afternoon sun. The *tías* of course, and even Petra, didn’t have a car, but Tia Panchita’s car and chauffeur, Eusebio, in his impeccable gray uniform and with his unflappable mien, were made available whenever possible.

Supper was simple, often as not being leftovers from dinner. The daily fare was neither Mexican nor American, but a happy mix of the two, and the *tías* were excellent cooks. Chicken was the staple meat, roasted, fried, or boiled as in *arroz con pollo*, or as the good old mid-west American chicken and dumplings, likely brought south by Mother as exotic Iowa cuisine. *Frijoles refritos*, another staple, were apt to show up at any meal, as well as those Southern regulars: black-eyed peas and okra.

Border Cuisine

I have always attributed to the fact that so much of the family’s food had traditionally arrived “on the hoof” – beef slaughtered at the ranch, chickens from the chicken yard, etc. – that so many family members had highly idiosyncratic food preferences: Tia Rosa for example, savored the chicken’s almost inedible gizzard; Eufemia enjoyed the boiled feet of the chicken and Anita, the “Pope’s Nose”, the fleshy stump to which the chicken’s tail feathers attach. All seemed to like the boney neck. Mother, however, may have deserved the prize: her three favorites, all from the beef critter, were the tongue, the brain, and *tripe*, the reticulated lining of the reticulum, the first of the cow’s four stomachs, boiled to

tenderness. Many years later I discovered that tripe is a popular component of the cuisine of Florence, Italy, where I enjoyed it in some fine restaurants (the *Campeonis did* come from Northern Italy).

“Chili con carne,” or just plain chili (as *Norte Americanos* know and worship it) did not exist as such; instead there was *carne con chili*, consisting simply of cubed beef or pork in a rich, red sauce but only moderately *pico*, gourmet fare in comparison to the “Texas” product. Possibly going back to the Solís’ Spanish traditions, much less chili seasoning was used in the family’s traditional Mexican recipes. Chili peppers, mainly the *chilis piquines* (or *chilipiquines*), fiery hot little red or green pea-sized berries that grew wild at the ranch, were used in the Champion kitchen, but only in great moderation.

The two great dishes that were served only on special occasions were the traditional *tamales* and *cabrito*. The preparation of tamales is so involved and labor intensive that no one is going to spend hours making six or even a dozen. The *tías* and their kitchen help would spend a day making the quantities of the finely ground corn *masa*, the filling of finely chopped or ground seasoned meat with raisins, cutting and soaking the dried corn husks, rolling and wrapping them. They were made to a family recipe unlike any tamale I have ever tasted, not at all hot or *pico* like the fiery hot Mexican ones from the Tamale Boat in the plaza or María Martínez’ at the ranch. The Champions may have originated a unique variation at some time when they wound up with a lot more masa than filling, so they proceeded to wrap solid masa tamales in the corn husks, identifying these by tying a thin ribbon of corn husk around the tamale. They proved so popular that a certain number were always made thus – I almost preferred them.

Cabrito (goat kid) was also a dish reserved for large festive occasions, not only because of the elaborate preparation required, but because the main ingredient was available only in a sizeable amount...the old family recipe began, “First, kill the *chivo*.”

Cabrrito was possibly the most celebrated and raved-about dish in the Champion cuisine, and one of its greatest fans was the family's pastor, Father Frigón, a close friend and frequent guest. One time the Padre became exceptionally exuberant over the singular flavor of the *chivo*, and the others teased him that, if he weren't told, he wouldn't know what the meat was, and he of course contested vigorously. Frank Champion, as we have seen described in his daughter's letters as "the 'worse' tease," apparently might also have qualified as the 'worse' practical joker. The next time the padre was invited for *cabrrito* he was served his usual generous plateful which he attacked with customary gusto. Only then was the poor man informed that a substitution had been made in his portion, the *chivo* having been replaced by an ageing tomcat. The effect was entirely predictable, but in time he did recover; whether or not he stipulated a heavy penance, there was in time forgiveness. Such was Texas frontier humor.

Around 1932, in the depths of the Depression, a fisherman came past the house one morning in his ancient pickup truck with a 55-gallon drum in back. One of the *tías* spotted him, got his message and sent me out with 2-and-a-half gallon bucket, which he filled to the brim with gorgeous, plump, live shrimp for fifty cents. They disappeared so fast I hardly remember how the *tías* prepared or served them, beyond boiling. A remarkable thing about this incident is that it is the only instance I can remember of any seafood as the main course – or any course - from the *tías'* kitchen, which seems remarkable considering the family's legacy of commercial fishing and the sea. I think it was that they took it for granted; if you wanted seafood you went to Point Isabel. It was always there to enjoy alive and fresh out of the sea; if you bought it in Brownsville, it would be a day old, and refrigeration being what it was then, why bother?

We didn't eat in restaurants; there were very few to speak of in those years, except for fun in Matamoros, but I doubt if there was one seafood restaurant in Brownsville. *Tia* Petra was the *bon vivant* of the family, who loved good food and finding little known, out-

of-the-way but very good, authentic restaurants. One noon she took us to a little bare storefront in Point Isabel with plain wooden table and chairs, where she had arranged to have the fisherman owner serve us a special seafood dinner from huge raw oysters through Pompano and the entire menu. This, no doubt, was Point Isabel's top (only?) seafood restaurant.

"The Gulf," Point Isabel, Padre Island, the Laguna Madre, Brazos, and Boca Chica were the Valley's playgrounds. Bathing – we didn't call it swimming because only a few experts could actually swim in the surf (I didn't learn to swim until I was thirteen), boating (also very limited), fishing, "crabbing," "floundering," and, especially, just frolicking on the beach. The wonderful thing was, Spring Break hadn't been invented yet, nor resort hotels and time-sharing condos; we had it all to ourselves.

There were hazards, though, that came with that ownership for the unwary or uninformed. We were at Boca Chica late one Sunday afternoon in 1927 or 1928. Two big luxury sedans, their square rooftops a fully six feet above ground, the kind with jump seats and little flower vases on the door posts and window shades that pulled down for privacy for changing clothes, were parked bumper to bumper on the beach, maybe twenty feet from the water's edge. The folks were having a grand time splashing in the surf when one of the men noticed the cars were no longer twenty feet from the water; in fact, the water was lapping at the cars' tires. The tide was coming in, no mistake. The owners were at the wheels and starting up in minutes or seconds, but too late – the rear wheels just spun deeper into the wet sand. By now there were maybe twelve or eighteen men and boys, some in bathing suits, some in suits and ties and Panama hats - beach attire in those days – pushing and shouting in the deepening water to no avail, until the harsh truth broke through ...everybody get on the one side closest to the water, grab under the running boards and the spokes of the wheels, and one, two, three, HEAVE! Up the cars went, over on their sides into the sand...then again, over onto their roofs, over

again only two more times and they were upright on dry sand if a bit worse for wear... a lesson learned the hard way.

Going to and from the Point Isabel at night held a special risk. Most of the cattle ranches out in the salt flats were unfenced along the highway, so the cattle would lie on the warm pavement on cool nights. It was not unusual for a driver, sleepy or otherwise unwary, to wrap a cow around his bumper, often as fatal for the driver as for the cow.

Another hazard came to us with personally bitter, tragic reality. The Champions' dear friend Father Frigón was a vigorous, athletic young man, an excellent swimmer, who apparently was experienced with the surf and the treacherous undertow; perhaps it came on him without warning, we can never know, but it took him as it has so many.

There was a hotel (though nameless, as far as I knew) on Padre. You could only get there in a hired launch with no scheduled service. When it might have been built probably no one, even then, could tell you. A wide, low one-story frame affair with a sagging hip roof and surrounded on three sides by a wide porch, more or less enclosed by rusted-out screens, facing, not the Gulf beach, but its crazy, staggering dock on Laguna Madre. If it ever had known paint, no evidence remained. Looking back, I find it almost impossible to believe that we actually stayed there, but why do I remember so distinctly the floor covered with a layer of tiny snail shells, impossible to walk barefoot on, and the damp bed clothes with the permeating scent of the sea and primordial life?

The Champion Fish Company building (1899, Charles Champion, Proprietor), along with the octagonal wood frame lighthouse, were the landmark signature structures of Point Isabel. The legend of the painted sea creatures on the Champion building that came through the family told how an itinerant, jobless artist/ fisherman received a winter's food and lodging for his timeless creation. My best remembrance of it is as the destination of a birthday trip out to the Point on a self-propelled Diesel railcar in 1930. As a desti-

nation, it was a bit anticlimactic; the painted fish were impressive enough, but the inside of the building was dark and cavernous, with a few musty glass counter-showcases displaying incongruously nothing but a lot of souvenir baskets made from empty Armadillo shells – without even heads. The building achieved some national recognition though; the January 1939 National Geographic, in an article on the Valley, included a close-up of the building.

Mother's favorite water sport in her more sedate years was fishing, which she loved dearly. I use the term sport with some latitude; she never owned a rod and reel or even high-test line. There were no sleek power boats with outriggers, just the great jetties that extend out into Laguna Madre for hundreds of feet. Her "high test" would be quarter or half inch rope with a chain leader; the hardware store had hooks from a half inch to four or five inches, big enough to bait with cut-up chunks of mullet to a good-sized whole live fish, depending on what catch she had in mind. I best remember one catch she didn't have in mind. I wasn't with her... she had always been a solitary fisher, consistent with her quiet, thoughtful nature. This time she realized very quickly she had hold of something big; not only was it powerful, it played the line in a very unusual way. Fortunately, it was a busy morning on the jetty, and some men close by saw her struggle and came to the rescue. They saw in a hurry they weren't going to pull it up onto the jetty so they dragged it, fighting mightily, to shore. It turned out to be a giant ray, Sting, Electric, or whatever variety, we never heard. The *túu* had no recipes and less enthusiasm for any ray dishes.

Mother's cousin María Fernández shared the Champion fishing genes. María's most notable exploit was of a more pragmatic concept, though still impressive. Late one afternoon she made up a line of some half to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch hemp rope with a chain leader and a live mullet on a four or five-inch hook, secured it to a piling on a jetty, tossed it in, and went home – there was an honor code among jetty fishermen. Next morning her catch was waiting as expected: a gigantic jewfish, member of the sea bass family, probably weigh-

ing in at around 350 to 400 pounds. She was ready for it with the needed manpower to land it (they weren't great fighters), clean it, cut it up, and load it on a truck to haul it into town. The Fernández family took as much as they wanted – I don't remember that the *tías* took any - and the rest went, much appreciated and enjoyed, to the sisters at the convent.

For us youngsters, the greatest fishing experience of our lives was “deep-sea” fishing on Laguna Madre. Mother and *Tía* Petra – always game for something special, hired a commercial fisherman (Petra's restauranteur?) to take us out in his boat to do some real (not reel) fishing. The boat was just about the most exciting part for me – a big, beamy, well-worn, flat-bottomed veteran with patched canvas sails towering overhead. Our captain fed out a baited line for each of us, wound on sticks, and we were ready to reap the bounty of the sea. I only remember one catch of the whole outing that day, the first one, and it happened to be mine. Probably the first fish I'd ever caught, good enough size, twenty-four inches or so, but it was about the weirdest anything I'd ever seen: a hammerhead shark.

Sometime, probably in the mid-1920s, the U.S. Coast Guard built a new station, as I recall, on Point Isabel, and it occurred to *Tía* Panchita and her husband Miguel Fernández that the old station on Brazos Island would make a dandy beach house for a large family, so they bought it. It couldn't have been better designed for the purpose; three or four separate buildings, an office/radio shack headquarters, a bunkhouse, cookhouse/mess hall, storerooms, etc., all on a spacious platform, raised by huge pilings eighteen feet above the island sand. Situated on a narrow point, it had views of both the Gulf and of the inner sound with a sturdy dock extending into the sound. Mother, Petra and maybe a couple of the *tías* brought us kids out for a glorious week of sun, sand, and surf. We built the biggest sand fortress ever in the shade of the platform, beach combed, and collected bags of shells and sand dollars.

I remember it being Sunday, but we weren't scheduled to leave. The women had skilletts full of chicken frying on the big stove, when a large white official-looking boat came up and docked at the landing. A couple of men in white sailor uniforms came up the long flight of stairs, identified themselves as Coast Guard, and politely but firmly stated that there was an urgent, major storm warning, possibly hurricane strength. The order was for immediate evacuation. The women, with life-long experience of the Gulf, knew better than to protest. I recall vividly all the chicken being left on the stove, everyone being assisted into the whaleboat in whatever we were wearing, and our heading off through the waves and spray to Point Isabel. The good news, a day or so later, was that the storm failed to hit; the bad news for the swimsuit set, was that our glorious week was cut down to only two or three days. Not that the danger wasn't real: just a few years later, in 1933, the Valley caught one of its biggest hurricanes ever. We weren't there that summer, but I remember *Tia* Petra's letter... "we went out to check on *Tia* Panchita's place on Brazos, and we couldn't find it".

Reveille at Fort Brown

In town, the second-story window next to my pillow opened out onto Tenth Street, looking south just a few short blocks toward the main gate of Fort Brown. At six o'clock in the clear morning air came the bright staccato notes of First Call, and then Reveille; the bugler played each call twice into the big megaphone at the far corner of the parade ground. By the second sounding of Reveille, I was in my clothes and running down Washington Street, through the gate and across the parade ground, headed toward the long, low barracks and stables of the 12th Cavalry. The blacksmith sergeant would already have his forge glowing and be fitting a horseshoe to one of the mounts. Some of the early rising troopers would have their horses tethered to the picket line; mostly bays and sorrels, hard-worked, lean and fit. As early as I can remember, we had two books illustrated by Frederick Remington, with many pictures of the cavalry, and here they were, for real! My greatest

frustration was to have to get home for breakfast before the troops were saddled and mounted.

One morning, outside the officers' stable, a trooper was holding the bridle of a huge, gangly grey with a long head and mostly legs, wearing an "English" saddle (as did all officers' mounts), with, very strangely, on the ground at the left (near) side a little sort of step-stool with three small steps. No cavalry officer ever needed a step-stool to mount! A minute later came the answer. A tiny lady in crisp white shirt, jodhpurs, and well-worn polished boots appeared, went up the steps, took the reins, perched aboard, and trotted off in complete control. The horse orderly saw the wonderment in my eyes and proudly informed me that this was the Colonel's wife, and she and her horse, a jumper, had won trophies and set records at such places as Madison Square Garden.

I did get to see the troops mounted once, and in full dress and grand style. By chance, I happened to be near the parade ground one afternoon when mounted troopers began gathering, by ones and twos, many of them carrying musical instruments, trumpets, French horns, the works, and forming up in formation. This was getting to be a sight, all that shining brass, horses' heads tossing and tails swishing during random warm-up blasts and squawks from the musicians; but then came the ultimate, the grandest sight I'd ever seen! The drummer appeared, with two great copper kettledrums, one on each side of his saddle before him. The highlight of the performance was to see him twirl the two sheepskin-headed drumsticks overhead and cross them over to opposite sides as he made the beat. Great as was my boyish fascination with Fort Brown and the cavalry, not too long after, as a student at the University of Texas, I had the opportunity to serve in the 56th Cavalry Brigade, Texas National Guard and take part in 4th Army war maneuvers, possibly the last U.S. maneuvers with horse cavalry.

There are so many memories of the happy times in Brownsville in those days that come flooding in: an old *campesino* trudging up a dusty unpaved street in the direction of Snake King's place with a

big snake in a gunnysack slung over his shoulder; the pushcart out in Adams Street at siesta time displaying bottles of brightly-colored liquids to be poured into paper cones of shaved ice – the original popsicles? The *tías* said they weren't as good as they looked, and, any way, they always had a wooden crate of pop in the serving pantry, every flavor, grape to lime to cream soda, my favorite. Ice cubes didn't exist, and we got our choice of one bottle, room temperature, every afternoon – to our delight! Then there was the sporting goods store down about Eighth Street that sold saddles, bridles, and horse gear and had a life-sized horse model dominating the show room, displaying the finest Western rig ever...I'd come in every so often and feast my eyes on it, wishing I could get up in that saddle. There were the storefronts on Washington Street with the New-Orleans-style overhanging second floor galleries. Mother took us to visit her dear friend Mrs. Marie Browne in one of these gallery apartments, and it *was* like New Orleans, with her elegant furnishings. On Saturday afternoons we each got a quarter for the movie at the Capitol – they had pictures like “The Thin Man” with William Powell and Myrna Loy, but we found we could sit on wooden benches in the balcony of the store-front Texas Theater over on Washington St. for 10 cents, with the dazzling afternoon sun streaming through the second story windows behind us, where the black paint had peeled off, and see Lon Chaney in “The Phantom of the Opera” and Charlie Chaplin in “The Gold Rush”, “Our Gang” and Laurel and Hardy, and have 15 cents left over to squander on treasures at the dime store (when they *really were* dime stores). There was reading in the afternoon on the shady veranda; the *Herald* was tossed up around four, and we'd read “Boots and Her Buddies” and “Major Hoople” and “Out Our Way.” The (main, as far as I know) Brownsville Public Library was conveniently located right around the corner on Adams Street – a narrow little one-story store-front building with one long room full of delightful books, like *Black Beauty*. Right next to it, at the corner of Tenth, as I remember, was a really tiny sort of an adobe building, no more than ten-foot square, bearing a simple plaque advising anyone inter-

ested that it had been the headquarters of General Winfield Scott during the Mexican War. I also recall a sad, bittersweet sight: one bright morning, on Jefferson Street, a tiny hearse, converted from a British Austin midget car, painted an angelic, slightly rust-stained white with soft blue trim.

The rough days of the old cattle culture were fading, but Brownsville's coming of age in industrial America could have some rough edges, too. Edward and I were at our cousins the Celayas' house late one afternoon when young Dr. Henry Celaya, oldest of the four youngest boys, came in; I don't remember if he poured himself a glass of something, but the story that poured out of him was unforgettable. First, he was called to a tomato-packing plant in Olmito, where two women on the processing line had started expressing some strong opinions of each other regarding a man – what else? – and had proceeded to resolve their differences with their paring knives. After stanching the blood flow and restoring hygiene and sanity, a call came from another plant, but this time too late for medical help. The plant was served by an overhead trolley system, which moved the produce in baskets to the work stations; a trolley had derailed, and one of the men volunteered, after cutting off the power, to crawl across the tracks to right the car. The volunteer himself likely signaled ok, meaning “It's on!” and some person on the floor unthinkingly threw the switch. The helpful young volunteer, sprawled across the tracks, was electrocuted.

Air Show

Sometime in the early to middle thirties, I suddenly became aware that Brownsville had an airport, surprising for a kid, one of whose almost total preoccupations was airplanes; perhaps it was because, before that, there really wasn't much of an airport. At any rate, my discovery happily coincided with a major advance in local transit, the *camion* – essentially a pickup truck with bench seats and canopy that would take you most anywhere in the Brownsville area, including the airport, for a nickel. Actually, the airport was quite impressive, with three large modern metal hangars (two of them

housing shops and services for the eastern maintenance division of Pan American Airways) and another large hangar to the north (apparently providing storage for privately owned or visiting aircraft). In between was nestled the terminal, utterly incongruous and perfectly charming, a little white residential-looking (for want of a better word) house. The façade, very simple and homey, had a double-door opening onto the airfield apron. I'm not sure about a white picket fence.

The rarest sights at the Brownsville airport were airplanes. On my first visit, I saw only two: two brand shiny new airliners, Douglas DC-3s, huge for 1930, the most advanced design in commercial aircraft. They were in one of the hangars, apparently just delivered to Pan American. The areas of the fuselage above the windows were covered with paper stencils where the beautiful blue and gold letters "Pan American Airways" were being sprayed on. The next plane I remember seeing was one of the famous, ubiquitous Ford Tri-motors, the grand-daddy of all U. S. passenger air transport, the ten-passenger corrugated aluminum work-horse of all the fledgling airlines of the 1920s. Only, Brownsville had no scheduled airline service; this one was carrying airmail and freight, tons of it in the cabin and huge bins that dropped down from the wings.

San Antonio was the hub of U. S. military aviation at the time, and Army Air Corps pilots were required to log a certain amount of "cross-country" time. Very quickly Brownsville and its fun sister city across the Rio Grande became a popular destination for young, foot-loose pilots. Often Army planes would come in low over town to announce their arrival so that a certain friend could meet them at the field. On arriving at the field one afternoon, I was delighted to see a compact little Army biplane "Pursuit ship", a Curtiss P-6 Hawk, parked on the runway apron. Sure that it would be taking off next morning I was there bright and early. The mechanic was already in the cockpit warming up the engine, and, in minutes, no less, a classy little tan Ford convertible pulled up, driven by one of Brownsville's fairest in filmy summer chic.

She and her bronzed passenger in khaki stepped out of the car for a brief but heartfelt exchange of affections – a full-color Ford ad come to life from the *Saturday Evening Post*, for sure. The throttle idling, our hero buckled on his parachute and climbed into the cockpit, revved the engine briefly, and gave an O.K. nod to the mechanic, who pulled the wheel chocks. The 600 super-charged horses up front roared to life and onto the runway heading past the Pan Am hangars. The little plane was airborne in seconds, but twenty feet off the ground, its bright yellow wings with red, white and blue star cockades flashing in the sun, it kept going south at full throttle, out over the chaparral to the edge of the Rio Grande. Then it shot up and over on its back in a half-loop, then a half snap-roll, back down to twenty feet, and in seconds was heading back towards us. A quick salute, a blown kiss, a waggle of the wings and off it flew into the Wild Blue Yonder. For a twelve-year-old boy, or a twenty-something young lady, it was some show!

The exotic charm of Matamoros was pretty much lost to my ten-year-old sensibilities; the ever-present *Policía*, gleaming pistols and cartridge belts on their beefy hips; the tall, dark doorways opening into tall, dark rooms with no furnishings other than showcases with collections of strange looking objects that seemed to fascinate grown-ups, especially women. Even the movie theater was uninviting, without a marquee and with strange-looking posters. Later, I would begin to see it differently: cantinas, double-doors wide open to the sidewalk blaring rollicking Mexican music; I remember, at a lunch with Mother and Petra, discovering succulent chilled mangoes. The bullfight posters on every wall did intrigue me, and later, I would become for a brief period a *gringo aficionado*. It was bush league to be sure, the wiry but fast and dangerous little bulls, the *picadores'* ancient, decrepit, heavily padded mounts. But the color, the music, the pageantry, and ritual stirred the Spanish genes deep within me.

Matamoros gave opportunity for Tia Petra's restaurant questing, and one she introduced us to typified her unconventional but discriminating taste. The street entrance on the east fringe of the city

gave the impression of a modest private residence; typical of her "finds," the owner seated us on a very private open porch, surrounded by tropical foliage, and again, as so often, it seemed we were the only guests. There was no menu; *Tia* had probably suggested a lunch of wild game, very likely his specialty. In any case, it was delicious and certainly authentic, down to the birdshot in the duck.

La Gloria

An early summer morning around 1925, we made what must have been the first outing to "the ranch", as we always called *La Gloria*, for the three of us children: Edward, about eight, and I, about five, in our crisp new *chinos* (Mother and *Tia* Petra knew South Texas cowboys wore *chinos*, not Levis) with straw sombreros, red bandanas and little *reatas*. Betty, three, was a tiny *rancherita* in a white blouse, red-print skirt, and sombrero. We were out on the sidewalk around six a.m. with a pile of food bags and baskets, suitcases, and two or three live hens with feet tied and wings clipped, waiting for José to arrive from *La Gloria* in his Model T Ford truck. Jolly José Martínez, the tenant and manager of *La Gloria*, would have gotten up around 4:30 or 5:00 in order to drive the twenty-five miles to Brownsville, twenty-five miles back, have breakfast, and be in the field at his usual time. Today, like every day, was a work day.

In the 1850s, with the end of the war with Mexico, there were restless young men in the new city of Brownsville, burning with entrepreneurial spirit, looking about for new opportunities. Albert Champion had, among other things, founded and operated the Point Isabel-Brownsville Stage Mail and Freight Line. Richard King and Mifflin Kenedy operated flat boats up the lower Rio Grande from the coast. Looking about as far as they could see was raw, trackless, untamed land populated with thousands, possibly millions of wild, unbranded Longhorn cattle and wiry mustang horses. For these men the future was spelled in one word: ranching. The land was mainly owned by Spanish land grantees (among

them our Solís family of Point Isabel, whose holdings were on the Mexican side of the river, the *Solís*). King and Kenedy went north along the gulf coast; Josiah Turner established his Galveston Ranch on the Rio Grande above Brownsville, and adjoining it Albert Champion bought and developed the *La Florida*, the oldest ranch in Cameron County, and *La Gloria*. His lands extended for fifteen miles north of the river to *Tio Cano* Lake, where he maintained other ranches.⁷

The end of the Civil War brought great prosperity and population growth to the industrial east, creating a hearty appetite for the food small eastern farms were least able to provide: beef. Cattle prices zoomed, but there was a problem in getting the product to the eastern market. A solution was provided when the railroads pushed west, heading for California. These ranchers and others in the "Texas Triangle" from Brownsville to Laredo to Corpus Christi were among the first to send the great trail herds of thousands – eventually totaling millions - of Longhorns north across the western prairies to the railheads at Dodge City and Abilene. Not all the cattle were shipped east; great numbers went to stock the ranches being established throughout the western states.⁸

However, with high cattle prices there was a price to be paid by the ranchers themselves, as well as the citizenry of the lower Rio Grande: cattle thievery and attendant crimes carried out by lawless, dangerous bands of armed men from both sides of the river, Mexicans and Americans alike. Thousands of cattle were involved, to the extent that a corrupt Mexican general was filling beef contracts with the Mexican army with stolen American cattle. When the District Court convened in 1867, Albert Champion and other prominent citizens served with great courage on the Grand Jury with Mifflin Kenedy as foreman to execute the laws, and, through their efforts, over seventy offenders were convicted and sent to the penitentiary.⁹

We don't know when the ranch house at *La Gloria* was built, just a few hundred yards from the low banks of the Rio Grande, but we

have a clue in the heavy iron-barred windows (like those of a jail house, but to keep criminals out, not in) and in the timbers placed in iron brackets inside the double doors that it would have been at the height of the raiding – in the 1860s to 1870s. Ranch houses were burned and their occupants killed, and Albert Champion wisely ordered very simple, solid brick construction; the inside walls were the same whitewashed bricks as the outside.

By the 1880s, the cattle boom was over, especially in south Texas. The trail drives ended when the open prairies were fenced in with the new barbed wire, and the western ranches were closer to rails with up-bred stock. Albert continued management of his ranches, but was also occupied with other mercantile and civic affairs. He served for many years as Road Commissioner of District No.1, and, in 1873, Governor Davis appointed him Pilot Commissioner for the Brazos Santiago Port. With his death at 74 in 1890, there seems to have been little serious interest in cattle ranching on the part of his three sons, George, Frank or Joséph; they, as well as Albert's brothers and many of their sons, also served in a variety of public offices. Frank, in addition to conducting a successful business, was City Secretary for many years and held the office of District Clerk at the time of his death in 1919. Brother George served twenty-two years as Tax Assessor and Collector for Cameron County.¹⁰ Even Petra had a career as a secretary in the City offices. But as the main ranch properties were sold off, *La Gloria* remained in Frank's and (ultimately) Petra's hands, to gain a special, sentimental hold on the heart of almost every family member. As well as giving a sense of history and permanence, it was an uncluttered, uncomplicated place, where life was simple and undemanding, and gave one the tranquility to put things in order.

The magic of *La Gloria* affected every branch of the family who came to know it. The story of Lucile's grandfather, Dr. Edwards, was an unusual example, as related in his obituary: After some twenty-five years of medical practice and consular service on both sides of the Rio Grande,

in 1893 he moved to Brownsville where he owned a drugstore and continued his medical practice until failing health compelled him to retire...and he moved to the country near La Gloria, this county.

Apparently he built a home near *La Gloria*, the ranch itself being very much in use by the Champions.

Brownsville Herald, Sept. 3, 1909: News was received this morning by Frank Champion that his father-in-law, Dr. A.L. Edwards of La Gloria, had died suddenly at his home near that place on Friday night...about midnight, being buried at the La Gloria burying ground on the following Saturday...One of the saddest features of Dr. Edwards' death was the fact that there was no one at the house excepting Mrs. Edwards and their daughter, Miss Kate Edwards, their home being entirely surrounded by water so that they were unable to obtain aid ...until...the following morning. Miss Edwards managed by going to the bank of the creek near the house, and which at the time was greatly swollen, and by calling for some time, to attract the attention of Joe Champion, who lives near the Edwards home [at the La Gloria ranch house?], and told him of her father's death. Mr. Champion at once procured a boat, going to the home of the stricken family and aiding them as best he could. Such arrangements as were possible were made for the interment...the following day in the cemetery near La Gloria. It was accomplished with great difficulty as much of the road was under water several feet deep.¹¹

I never saw or heard reference to a cemetery near *La Gloria*. There was a small "orphan" church, perhaps a mile west on the north side of the Highway; it could have been there. Understandably,

Elizabeth Edwards and daughter Kate did not wish to stay alone in their country *La Gloria* home, but apparently wished to remain close, and so moved to Santa María, where they remained.

The ranch house, facing north to the two-lane paved Military Highway, was an architectural gem, so perfect in size, proportion, and function, that to have altered it in any detail or dimension could only have detracted. Because of the low terrain close to the river, the floor was three feet above ground level. A gable roof ran the full width of the front, extending out over the open front porch supported by six plain wooden columns. The entrance door at center opened to a wide central hall going through to the broad screened porch at back. There were two bedrooms, opening off either side of the entrance hall. Each bedroom had a fireplace on its inside wall, opposite the bed, the two great chimneys rising from the ridge of the roof. A round cistern or well / water trough for visiting horses was just to the left of the front steps.

A wing extended back from the west bedroom to a simple dining room and, finally, the kitchen. A wide screened porch ran inside the “L” of the main bedroom section and the dining/kitchen wing. Set into the back wall of the not very large kitchen, about two feet above the floor, was a small fireplace, nothing more than a square opening into the brick wall, in which a great deal of the cooking and baking was done over mesquite logs and coals as it always had been. A modern twentieth-century addition, for quick jobs such as boiling water or coffee, or scrambling eggs, was a little two burner kerosene stove set on a small table nearby. The sink consisted of a table with a dish-pan, a bucket of water and a dipper. The little wooden ice box had an ice-capacity of maybe a ten-pound block. There was no plumbing or electricity – or radios – ever, even after the Rural Electrification Act of the 1940s. All lighting in the house was from kerosene table lamps.

The solid brick walls of the house were, on the exterior, the natural light beige color of the brick; the interior bare brick walls painted a pristine white, undecorated, with Quaker simplicity,

the window-trim and doors accenting it in a dark brown. There was one significant exception to the simplicity: In each of the two bedrooms was a great double bed with an over-arching half canopy from which could be hung a mosquito bar. When I was seven or eight I came down with "a touch of Malaria" and spent a few days in the bed in the east bedroom. (We kids normally slept on cots on the back screen porch.) In my delirium the great canopy above me, its pink lining arranged in a splendid sunburst, became the mainsail of Columbus' flagship, the *Santa María*. I believe it had more to do with my recovery than my medicine. The only wall decoration I recall in the entire house was the picture of the *Madonna de Guadalupe* in the *tías'* bedroom. The furniture was plain wood, painted a dark brown. The "living room" was the wide center hall, with a couple of straight chairs and a small table for a few magazines and a kerosene lamp. But there was an Entertainment Center: a cabinet Victrola. We did our best to ruin dozens of records, "Ramona," "Isle of Capri," Rudy Vallee's "Stein Song," and "*Allá en el Rancho Grande*," with the cup of dull, worn-out steel needles.

Down a path to the right outside the kitchen door, were three little one-room clapboard structures: first, a tiny "house" with the upper halves of three sides screened, with a wood counter where meat could be cut in strips to be hung to dry for *carne seca*. Betty loved this house as a playhouse. Next in line along the brick walk, stood the bathhouse, about 8' x 10', with an ancient claw-and-ball-footed bathtub and, beside it, an old wooden chair with no back. Bathing was accomplished by filling a bucket at the windmill, placing it on the chair, standing in the tub and, with the dipper, taking a refreshing shower. Ventilation was provided by a one-foot-square "window" with movable louvers, about five feet off the floor. When Ramona (Munchie) was the house girl and I was having my afternoon shower, she would come by the "window" and call out, "Champion! I see you!" Of course she couldn't, she was barely five-feet-tall herself. We two twelve-year olds had an innocent little thing going. No bathroom in the ranch house, just

washstands in the bedrooms and the ladies' bedroom had a commode to be emptied by the house girl every morning.

Continuing down the path, one passed under a trellis where *Tía Rosa*, her wide-brimmed straw sombrero drawn down like bonnet over her face, arms protected by old black stockings with finger-holes cut in the toes, would prune her grape vines in hopes of a vintage year. Finally, at the end of the walk (run?), *la casita*, a standard two-holer, though it never seemed to be shared by anyone except an occasional tarantula, and on one occasion I recall, a creature we called a "Walking Stick", a large insect, four inches across, all of whose members (including its body) resembled straw. Mother Nature had provided this creature to hide itself in a horse's or cow's forage with possibly fatal results. Not a welcome companion in the privy.

Further back at the right was, most incongruous for a Texas border ranch, a large new red Iowa-style barn. It told of the transition in the Valley from cattle ranching to crop farming. The harvested produce (tomatoes, cotton, and corn) could be stored in it, safe from the elements. As with the house, the floor was a hopefully-flood-safe three feet from the ground. Beyond the barn was the chicken house. Mostly chicken wire, and predating the barn by decades, I often thought a really hungry coyote wouldn't have much of a problem with it. At twilight, the chickens knew enough to go in, and one of us would latch the door. Not a great distance beyond toward the river was a dense stand of brush where a pack of coyotes nested. Night-time for them was playtime, and they had fun; the sound of their high-pitched voices was eerily like happy children in a schoolyard. Another distinctive sound was the loud, raucous call of the chachalaca, whose name is a phonetic spelling of its call. A birding guide refers to it as "locally abundant in...thickets," indicating their presence in the U.S. only in the Rio Grande Valley and a tiny area of Florida; large, 18" golden-brown birds related to grouse, doves, and turkeys. I only saw them once, in brush along the highway.

Just west of this complex, along the edge of our property (the cultivated fields lay to the east and south), a narrow dirt road ran south about a quarter mile from the Military Highway to the levee on the north bank of the Rio Grande. Across, over on the south bank, was Mexico and more Champion land, more *La Gloria*. Over the eighty or more years of flood and drought over the wide, flat delta, uncounted changes in the river's course had transplanted acreages of Champion land into Mexico, and Mexican land into *La Gloria*. At times, there would be nicely-crafted boats made of goatskins stretched and tarred over frames of flexible branches, sitting in the open on the Mexican bank. There were times when boats were unneeded; rolling up pant legs or hiking up skirts would do.

On a moonless night, when we were sitting on the screened back porch, two men dressed in dark suits would materialize from the gloom near the screen. Greetings would be exchanged and a quiet conversation in Spanish would ensue with the *tías*. They were tenants and managers of some of the Champions' Mexican land, reporting and making crop payments.

The Martínez' home was across the road, on the north side of the Highway. Though differing entirely, it was all one, all *La Gloria*. What or when its origins might have been would be anyone's guess. The nucleus of the house appeared ancient, a typical Mexican *javal*, the construction essentially wattle, with a sort of screened porch on the front which was the dining space, with a narrow table; all this with a dirt floor at ground level. Don't be misled about the dirt floor; generations of bare feet, large and small, had packed the dirt to a hard, smooth surface, and every afternoon (siesta for all but the field workers), María or one of the girls washed the floor so that it shone, and the dampness cooled the small house. I want to say the roof was thatch, but it was, more likely, rough shingles. At the right end was a tiny bedroom or sleeping area; at the left the kitchen, and in the end kitchen wall was, as in the ranch house, a raised fireplace, where all the cooking was done. Through José's and María's frugality and hard work, they were able to build a substantial wood frame modern wing to the little house with a

raised floor and shingle roof with two bedrooms for the several boy and girl arrivals.

There were no other buildings, sheds, barns, or even chicken coops in the complex. The closest thing to a building was a sort of lean-to, jerry-built out of poles, timbers and planks with a corrugated-iron roof that sheltered the Model T truck and the farm wagon. At night, the two dogs, Ginger and Pistola, would gather with the chickens, who roosted and laid eggs everywhere, including the seat of the truck. Big Lupe, the woodcutter, would put down his bedroll in the bed of the truck; another occupant was a calf which was being weaned. All this was not slovenliness; just what worked. Just to the north, closer to the house, was the corral which held the livestock: two fine big mules (there was no tractor then), a jackass, a milk cow or two, hogs, and a saddle horse.

Of the younger Martínezes, the oldest was Virginia (pronounced Bvirheenia), a mature young woman. (I was never sure if she was María's daughter or sister.) Next came Mauricio, called "Weecho," in his upper teens – a trim, well-built handsome lad with shining blue eyes and a ready, winning smile, who could do anything, and who possessed his dad's up-beat personality. He was the first older boy, other than my brother, whom I thought of as a hero, an idol. Next came Ramona, "Munchie," petite, but not in any sense delicate – a *gamin* with a mischievous twinkle and an ear-to-ear smile. Jesusita, "Jessie," close in age to Ramona, was her opposite: shy, taller, and pretty with large, dark, thoughtful eyes. Then there were the two little brothers, Manuel "Memel", and Roberto, who, I'm quite sure, had not started school. They tagged me around and I had fun whittling little toys – *pistolas*, etc. – for them. In 1973, I had the pleasure of receiving a letter from Roberto from California, and, very soon after, I saw a very impressive young man named Roberto Martínez appear on a McNeil-Lehrer Public Television discussion of Latin American relations. There was enough of a hint in the tone of his letter to make me wonder if the man on TV was indeed my young friend of so long ago.

There were other, occasional, members of the Martínez *ménage* who would appear magically when a need arose for additional field hands or some other work. Always, of course, they came from across the river – that was where they happened to live, as simple as that. When they were no longer needed, after a day, a week, even a month, they went home. Big Lupe, possibly María's brother, came most often and stayed longest, to cut all the firewood for both households for cooking and winter heating. With the mule team hitched to the high-sided wagon, he'd head out the narrow back road through the dense brush, mesquite and prickly-pear, with his heavy double-edged axe, honed razor-sharp, and come back with a full load of eighteen-inch Mesquite logs. The way his axe would cut through a mesquite log and leave a glossy yellow-brown, polished surface was a source of fascination for me. The hard Mesquite coals would be banked in the little fireplaces after supper and be ready to fire up at breakfast; the sweet aroma pervaded everything, everywhere in the ranch country of south Texas.

Over on the "Champion side," back toward the river beyond the barn and the chicken coop, was a tiny little house that had always fascinated me. It had just one room, the door in one side and maybe a window in the opposite, and the whole inside was papered with old *Brownsville Herald*s, probably some pretty interesting (like maybe Lindbergh's flight), which the occupants probably couldn't read. It was vacant for the first few years we kids were there, but, one morning, we looked out, and some folks were in it. It was a very young little family. The mother and father couldn't have been more than twenty, if that, and the little girl, maybe two, was outside the door playing with her doll in the sandy dirt. I don't think they took their meals with the Martínezes, who had enough mouths to feed; somehow I have the idea they built a fire on the ground and cooked there, and got some milk from María. It was cotton-picking time, and they must have come over in the night in one of the goatskin boats. There was a sanctity in the little tab-

leau that made me think of the Holy Family. I never learned their names, except for the father's, which was, appropriately, Amador.

With the people, merchandise and goods crossed the river, mostly from south to north; clothing, food, artifacts, tools, and firearms could be had much cheaper, and often of as good or better quality, easily accessible, and of course, duty free. The two dining room windows at *La Gloria* looked out on the dirt road that ran from the river to the Military Highway. We were having a later-than-usual supper one evening when in the dusk I saw coming north up the road toward the highway an unusual sight: a team of mules pulling a farm wagon. But these were not just any mules; they were a very fine, well-matched pair. And it was not just any farm wagon, but a large, brand shining new one with high stake sides, painted a beautiful dark green with fine red and gold piping trim, with drop-lets from the Rio Grande glistening on its sides, and who knows who or what was inside.

Another visitor, the most occasional, was one most often mentioned and referred to, the patriarch of the Martínez family, Don Manuel. I encountered him one afternoon by the resaca by the Martínez house, under an old mesquite. He was a smallish man, grizzled, with a gray stubble and a twinkle in his eyes. He was sharpening a machete on the flat side of an old grindstone wheel. I don't remember either of us saying much; we communicated with the empathy in our eyes. He finished the machete - he probably could have shaved with it - and took from his *morral* some dried cornhusks which he cut with his knife into little three-inch squares; then out came a package with a picture of a black duck on it and the title, *PATO*; he pulled out the contents - a big plug of the blackest chewing tobacco ever - and patiently cut a chunk of it into minute shreds, scooped them into an old Bull Durham bag, took one of the cornhusk "papers," and built himself a smoke. And what smoke! A fragrance that made Bull Durham seem like kids' stuff.

The daily menu of the Martínez household seemed to be based on three ingredients: tortillas, frijoles and coffee. I remember three-year-old Roberto at breakfast with a big cup of light tan coffee and fifty percent milk. Meat, especially beef, was too dear for everyday fare. María's day in her tiny kitchen began the night before by putting a sizeable pan of shelled field corn to soak in a whitish solution of lime-water. First thing in the morning the softened kernels were ground into a moist, grayish dough which she and one of the girls would pat into the remarkably uniform six-inch discs which they put on the stone slab resting on the glowing bed of mesquite coals.

The two younger Martínez girls, Ramona – “Munchie” – and Jessie, took turns being the housemaid at the ranch house, a sought-after plum – light work and good pay. Whoever was the “house girl” for the week wrapped a stack of the warm tortillas in a fresh white cloth and put them in the center of our table each morning to be buttered, rolled, and eaten with the bacon and eggs or whatever was the fare. I've eaten *tortillas de maíz* in many places, in the finest hotels and restaurants (don't even consider what we get in supermarkets), but none have come close to María's, hot from her “mesquite kitchen”. They were so good that Tía Anita was inspired one noon to make chicken enchiladas, top dressed with melted cheese. Now, *that was Gourmet!* Two other tortilla recipes appeared occasionally, *tortillas de barina* and *tortillas de manteca*. The first, large, plate sized, made from white bleached flour and cooked on a griddle with brown scorched spots, again a delicacy. The second, as the name implies, were thick 4” discs made from corn *masa* with lard; rich, but good.

Beef and pork did make it into the Martínez' kitchen, on the hoof, so to speak. There was an arrangement, typical on farms and ranches, for the butcher to come to the ranch and slaughter the animal and keep a share of the meat in his locker for the Martínez family. Of course, that meant meat only as often as José would get to town - not very often. The cow, an old dry cow – a replacement heifer would be on the way up - would be brought out and snubbed to

the corral gatepost early in the morning. When the butcher drove up in his pickup, the entire family would be gathered at the corral for the big event. After laying out a tarpaulin where he planned to drop the animal, he'd do so with a mighty swing of his axe, landing the blunt heel of it squarely between the eyes, then cutting the large artery and collecting the blood in a large pan. He would then proceed to skin the carcass deftly in one piece from behind the ears, down the underside and inside the legs around the udder to the colon. The hide was folded on itself like a heavy, moist blanket and loaded onto the truck. Then the butchery began, with knives and saws, and the audience began to disperse. José and Weecho stayed to help. I think the job was pretty well done and loaded before noon. One butcher, I remember, was either less deft with his axe or more efficient – at least more colorful; he arrived with a .38 revolver strapped to his hip and dispatched the victim with a single shot.

My first gun was a “B-B gun”, specifically a Daisy Air Rifle, no doubt a hand-me-down from Edward when I was probably seven or eight. Dad, proud of his military service, insisted that his sons learn respect for and proper use of firearms, and we learned and respected. Pretty soon I found you couldn't hit much with a B-B gun, so there came another hand-me-down, a boy-size .22, and finally my own full sized single shot bolt action Remington .22. I was lucky we could only afford single shot rifles; you became a good shot pretty quickly. If you were a kid on a ranch, that's what you did, hunt, though I never saw any of the Martínez kids hunting. No doubt Weecho did, when the time was right, and would have become a “crack shot,” but he was always working when I was around. Once, when I was down in the field by the river, just beyond the coyote hangout, José was under a mesquite having a coffee break, so I went over. He had by his side a shiny, well-oiled *treinta-treinta*, the classic lever action Winchester of western movie fame. He patted it and said there'd been a coyote getting a little troublesome, maybe working on the chicken coop. It was the only time I ever saw his gun.

I'd go out at sunrise and usually walk Lupe's back road through the brush. I never shot anything but rabbits (*conejos*), about the only things even partly visible in the brush much after sunrise. Sometimes I would just see feet below a prickly pear pad and calculate where to put my shot into the pad to hit his head or fore-quarters, with a reasonable amount of success. One rabbit would be enough of a bag for a morning, and I'd take it to the "screen house." I got so I could skin it and cut it up in minutes, and the *tías* would patiently – I like to think lovingly – cook it for my supper. I really did like *conejo*, even if no one else seemed to. I never encountered a coyote on my sorties, though I would see one occasionally along the road and wished I could get him; there was a generous bounty of fifty cents on them. I heard stories about the *jabalinas*, the fierce little saber-tusked wild pigs, peccaries, that inhabited the *chapparal*, and how they were hunted for sport on horseback with Browning Automatic Rifles, and even, some said, Thompson sub-machine guns. Some sport! Happily, armed only with my .22, I never saw one, especially under the wrong circumstances, such as a sow in defense of her litter.

One morning, I did have a chance at bigger game, but wisely took a pass. Walking slowly, quietly, as was my custom along the dirt road, I must have paused for a look at something in the brush, when the biggest canine I'd ever seen stepped out of the thicket into the road about three feet in front of me and stopped and stared. My first thought was that it was a stray German Shepherd, but I'd never seen one in the vicinity, stray or otherwise, in Cameron County. Besides, this guy was no German Shepherd. It stood close to four feet at the shoulder and had a coarser look, a light yellowish gray coat with black patches. I froze; he sized me up with a calm, self-assured look, decided I wasn't worth the trouble – I was about six feet even then – and went on across the road into the brush. He was, of course, a timber wolf, the *lobo* of the vast brushy plains of northern Mexico. I once saw a bobcat up in a mesquite tree, a golden ball of fur against the afternoon sun.

One morning, not long after, I'd finished the same circuit through the brush without a shot. Across the Martínez' place, at the edge of the resaca, a rabbit was sitting in the open on a little knoll. Judging from the back three-quarters, it was a tougher shot than it would seem, with his head and chest pretty well obscured. I was just across the road from home and thought, well maybe I'll bring something home, so I made my shot; he dropped, and I went over and picked him up by the hind legs as usual. A good-sized little fellow, he was shaking and quivering, and I can hear to this day, the very words I said to myself: "Why am I doing this?" I don't remember now, I suppose I finished him off and put him under a bush where the buzzards might not find him. All I do remember is I put my gun away that morning for good. For a long time, however, I did continue my walks for the sheer joy of watching the dawn breaking in the chaparral. In one such pleasurable moment, I came upon a six-foot black snake sprawled across the road, very slowly moving in a predatory way toward a wee baby rabbit, like a furry toy, which had its back to the snake and was oblivious to it, about a foot away. I had the pleasure of shouting and kicking some dirt, and the little guy was into the brush.

For all that, La Gloria's greatest gift to me I took almost without a thought or the realization of its moment until years later. There was never a time, from my earliest years, when I wasn't drawing. I sketched the things around me, things that inspired me or things I imagined. My greatest inspiration at the ranch was the horses and cattle, and the knowledge of anatomy, action and expression gained there became the basis of my career as an artist and illustrator of livestock and agricultural subjects. My greatest regret is that Mother, whose talent I had the great fortune to inherit, would never fully know the blessing she had given me.

La Gloria was just about twenty miles on the Military Highway from downtown Brownsville. For the first fifteen miles, there was nothing you could call a town; some farms and flat brushy, maybe ranch land, until you got to Los Indios, which wasn't really much of a town either, at least I don't remember any houses, just a gen-

eral store, with a gas pump, maybe two, but they also had the absolute essential that we stopped for – ice. Beyond *La Gloria* there were more hints of civilization. A few minutes on foot brought you to Blue Town, four or five little clapboard, one-or-two-room houses, all identical, all in a row just feet from the south edge of the highway, side by side a few feet apart, each with a tiny front porch just big enough for two chairs. All had once, many years ago, been painted blue. Nobody lived in Blue Town, and, surprisingly, no one in the family, and none of the Martínezes, seemed to know anything about it, so it was just Blue Town, and that was that.

Another mile and a paved road going off straight north five miles put you in La Feria, the metropolis. It had stores for just about everything: farm supplies, even clothing, and most important of all for kids, a soda fountain, where we could get those big frosty malted milks we fantasized about at the ranch when the temperature was well over 100 degrees. We made sure we knew when José was going to La Feria.

Santa María

Three miles west of *La Gloria* on the Military Highway came Santa María, population (by my guess) anywhere from fifty to five hundred. For some reason I never understood – possibly having to do with *La Gloria* – it included a number of Champions and even two Edwards (Mother's Georgia grandmother, Elizabeth, and her aunt, Kate). The first house encountered in Santa María, on the corner of the first street going north, was probably the most impressive house in town – a large (at least three-story) Queen Anne Victorian, freshly painted in pale yellow and light green, its corner lot landscaped with palms and tropical flowers. Around the corner at the back end of the property, next to a tree loaded down with bright yellow lemons, was a little house with hitching rail in front and a sign over the door, "U. S. Post Office, Santa María, Texas."

It was the home of Sebastian Champion, son of Nicholas, one of Albert's younger brothers and a cousin of Frank. His first wife,

Adelina Barton Stein, had died, and he had married Anastacia "Tacha" Champion Stark, his first cousin, a daughter of Nicholas' older brother Peter.¹² A widow, she was, by then, past child-bearing age. Going on, a block or more past the post office, was a large frame two-story house, needing paint, the long side facing the street, with apparently two front doors. It was the home of "Tacha's" two sisters, Felicitas "Fela" Champion (older and unmarried) and Luisa Champion Personius (younger and a widow). Of the contrast between Sebastian and Tacha's home and that of Fela and Luisa I can't comment: all seemed to be a perfectly content and happy family. Fela and Luisa lived off the land, tending a bountiful garden, and I remember going with Mother once when she spent a couple of hot summer days in Luisa's kitchen with dozens of boiling, steaming Mason jars, canning every kind of fruit and vegetable for the coming winter.

In 1980, *Tia* Luisa reached her hundredth birthday – at that time still a feat to celebrate. I believe she was the first of the Champions to do so, and a party of over a hundred family and friends gathered at her nursing home in Harlingen for the event. The guest list made up an impressive group of Valley folks, doctors, lawyers, public officials and some congressmen, among them a nationally prominent one, Kika de la Garza. I don't know if he was a Champion relative, but he was apparently a member of the Gulf Coast land grant family of that name. I had the pleasure to see and visit with *Tia* Luisa shortly before she died, later that same year.

Not far up this street was the cotton gin, where we brought our cotton from *La Gloria*. I never heard mention of whether Sebastian was involved with the gin, but it would seem likely. He was an impressive man, in the Champion mold, well over six feet with a penetrating gaze and serious mien, but the most memorable sensation I came away with from our first meeting was his handshake. Even then, my hands were large, but his hand seemed to wrap around mine at least one and a half times. He always wore a white pith helmet and white clothes, like the tropical adventurers in the movies. It would seem that Sebastian, apparently not a simple,

unsophisticated man, might find life in Santa María pretty dull. But there was Charley Frasier, with whom he shared an enduring intellectual bond: arguing politics, no matter where or what the weather or the time of day. Charley had a car, a two-seater Model T Ford, its canvas folding top long gone. One fine afternoon, they were out on the road when the temperature of the discussion rose to such a degree that Charley lost control entirely, and the car landed on its side in the ditch, Henry's four cylinder marvel still chugging away and the right hind wheel spinning in the air. As Santa María Champion legend has it, Charley turned off the ignition, the two antagonists climbed out into the ditch and put the car on its feet, climbed back in and chugged off without a pause in their argument.

A frequently-mentioned name in family conversations was José Angel (Joe) Champion, Sebastian's younger brother. I have no distinct recollection of meeting him, though I probably did. He could have been the Joe Champion who came to the rescue when Dr. Edwards died. I think José Angel and his family lived in Brownsville, as his daughter Mary Bertha (Berta) was close to Lucile and Petra. Berta married a young lawyer, Reynaldo G. Garza, who later was appointed Justice of the U.S. District Court by President Kennedy. Berta and Reynaldo kindly held family gatherings for Evelyn and me on two of our later visits.

A sight, in fact only the briefest glimpse, that was given me somewhere just south off the Military Highway, has remained etched in my memory all these years; a sprawling building, or complex of buildings, all a fresh, gleaming white in the morning sun. I thought, in that flash from a car window, that it had to be the remains of one of the old Spanish *ranchos*. Many years later, a friend gave me a book of beautiful pencil renderings of Texas' architectural treasures, and there, unmistakably, it was, a magnificent example of an early Spanish *ranchito*, captioned simply, *Rancho Blanco*, Santa María. My memory placed it closer to *La Gloria* than Santa María; if so, it would have been familiar to me. Now I wonder if it weren't west of Santa María, where I had seldom gone.

It must have been about 1932 that we were becoming aware that Mother was not feeling well, though she would never complain in any way in our presence. Finally, Dad told us that they said she had stomach ulcers. In 1932, the dread word cancer was almost never heard or spoken aloud; its progress was slow and there was really nothing they could do but try to alleviate the pain. With doctor bills mounting, we didn't go to Brownsville the next two summers. In summer 1935, came a precious, priceless gift: a family friend, Irene Ayers, offered to drive Mother to Brownsville for an extended visit. It was everything that could have been hoped for: Petra and the *Tías* making the house a luxury hotel; invitations and entertainments, Point Isabel, Boca Chica, La Gloria, Matamoros. On their return, Mother was renewed, her happy, smiling self. But, in the spring of 1936, the inevitable was becoming imminent: Dad took Mother along with Betty to Brownsville to be in the tender care of her three "Mothers" (the *Tías*) and Petra. Edward, Betty, and I spent the summer there, but had to return north to school. Dad was called sometime in November and was able to be with her when she died, at age forty-seven, on November 26 of 1936, just twenty years almost to the day they met, in their beloved Brownsville. Their love was deep and true, and Dad never remarried. They gave their three children the most wonderful imaginable gift: Brownsville.

We spent the last two summers of Mother's life at a lake cottage Dad's sister Louise owned, and true to her nature, Mother invited two young friends of Edward and me, whose families had been hit hard by the depression, to each spend a week with us at the little cottage. She was interred in the Champion crypt in the Old City Cemetery.

Epilogue

In the summer of 1938, Betty (age sixteen) and I (eighteen years old) drove the 3200 miles from Oak Park, Illinois, to Brownsville and back in my 1930 Model A Ford to spend the summer with the *Tías* and *Tía* Petra. In the fall of 1939, I transferred from

Iowa State College to the University of Texas at Austin to pursue a degree in Architecture with the intention of a practice in Brownsville. This did not work out, and I returned to Iowa State for a degree in Journalism and Economics. In 1942, Lt. Edward Murphy brought his wife and a bunch of his Air Corps Harlingen flight school buddies to show them Brownsville and the Champion house, etc. His plane was shot down in the Pacific in 1943. Some years after the war, so enamored of Brownsville was Betts, his widow, that she brought her new husband and their children to live in Point Isabel, forming close friendships with many of the Champions. I married Evelyn Brown, my Iowa State sweetheart, when I received my commission in the Navy. We returned to the Chicago area after the war and have two children, Tom and Julie, and one granddaughter. Betty married an Army pilot, William White of Pensacola, Florida, where she and Bill still live and have two children, Bill Jr., and Elizabeth, and many grand and great-grandchildren.

In 1953, with the *Tía* gone, Petra decided it made no sense to stay in the house and invited Betty and me, with our young families, to come and divide up what furniture, pictures, etc. we wanted. We both have these pieces in our homes today. Evelyn and I sleep in a great canopy bed, and I treasure and use Grandfather's unique Plantation Desk. The buyer of the house told Petra he would keep it intact, but when we came back in 1980 it was a parking lot, and the fine Methodist church across Washington Street was replaced by a three story cut-rate furniture store. We visited *La Gloria*, which *Tía* Petra also had to sell. José had died and María was living with one of her daughters in a neat little frame house just west of the ranch house, which was well cared for by the new owners. When we returned in 1980, it was all taken over by a big absentee operation, and the house was turned into a granary with metal grain storage tanks.

We had grand visits with *Tía* Petra, back and forth, and she took Evelyn and me to Monterrey and Saltillo, two of her favorite spots in Mexico. She died in Brownsville in 1964 at age eighty-five, and

is also interred in the Champion crypt. María Fernández married a “Yankee,” Lee Butler, a golf pro, in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, a summer resort area for wealthy Chicagoans. We, living in the Chicago area, were entertained by them often. They had no children. Uncle Albert, widowed, came to Louisville every year and bet a thousand dollars on the Kentucky Derby, and sometimes would come up to Chicago, always in great spirits, to visit us. Lill Champion married a John Russell who apparently died; she then married Lee Wright Browning. I believe it was when she was married to Mr. Browning that Mother and Dad took us to visit them at their home in Ashland, Kentucky. Much later, around 1980, Lill, apparently a widow and living in Andover, Massachusetts, discovered my address and we carried on a delightful correspondence. She gloried in her bright, red-haired granddaughter who had earned a scholarship to Cambridge. Mauricio “Weecho” Martínez was drafted into the Army. This patriotic young soldier had for a sergeant a merciless bigot who crushed, destroyed, the spirit of one of the finest young Americans I have known. Weecho made his way home, broken, to *La Gloria* and disappeared across the Rio Grande.

Endnotes

- 1 “The Sudden Death of Dr. A.L. Edwards,” *Brownsville Herald*, Sept. 3, 1909, from a clipping, so page number not available.
- 2 A. A. Champion, mimeograph of unpublished article, “Albert Champion,” p. 4.
- 3 Sister Barbara Peterson, Nazareth College, Bardstown, Kentucky (interviewer F. C. Murphy, by e-mail correspondence, Nov. 2, 2002).
- 4 Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (Garden City, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. & E. Haldeman-Julius, p. 371.
- 5 T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 665.
- 6 Clipping of an article in *The Cedar Rapids Republican*, January 1917, no page number.
- 7 A. A. Champion, “Albert Champion,” p. 3.
- 8 J. Frank Dobie, “The Longhorns” (New York: Bramhall House, 1941), p.69.

9 A. A. Champion, "Albert Champion," p. 5.

10 A. A. Champion, "Albert Champion," p. 4.

11 "The Sudden Death of Dr. A. L. Edwards," *Brownsville Herald*, Sept. 3, 1909.

12 All Champion genealogical references in this article are from A. A. Champion, *CHAMPION: The Champion Family of Point Isabel* (Brownsville: BorderPress Publishing, 2000).

The Restored Courthouse and Judge Oscar Dancy

by

Anthony Knopp

On October 26, 2006, Cameron County celebrated the (very expensive) restoration of the historic 1912 Courthouse. While the structure was out-of-service as the official courthouse, it had been named the Oscar Dancy Building in honor of the long-serving late county judge. On that pleasant fall evening the restored and again official Cameron County Courthouse was rededicated to Dancy, with his portrait presiding over the (new) commissioners' courtroom. The main address of the evening was given by Dancy's grandson, Dan Kennerly, a man whose charm reflected that of his ancestor. Some years previously I had obtained tapes of radio broadcasts made by Judge Dancy, and I now provided copies to his grandson. When the judge's voice first reached Kennerly's ears, his face lit up with delight at hearing a voice he had not heard for many decades.

Judge Oscar Dancy served nearly 50 years as Cameron County Judge, from 1920 to 1970, with a two-year interruption during the Depression. Born in a log cabin in North Carolina in 1879, Dancy gained his early political experience by making speeches for William Jennings Bryan during the 1896 presidential campaign. After serving in the Spanish-American War Dancy was chosen as mayor of a town in his home state, but his wife's illness compelled him to relocate to South Texas in 1909. Dancy practiced law for a time, was appointed county attorney in 1917, then elected county judge as the political machine of "Boss" Jim Wells finally faltered.

An enduring characteristic of both Judge Dancy's public policies and his personal life was his commitment to frugality. The judge did not waste money on liquor or fancy living, never owned a car,

and lived in a modest residence. Although he frequently travelled to Austin, Washington and Latin America on behalf of the county, he always strove to save the taxpayers' money by staying in second class hotels and eating basic meals. When, after 25 years, he was awarded a salary increase, he refused to accept it for himself. According to County Attorney Jack Wiech, Dancy "had the increase deposited in a special fund to help those who were in dire need... Whenever the special Fund was depleted, he gave from his own pocket." As a proponent of development in the twenties he was willing to commit funds to what became known as "Dancy's sidewalks"--roads constructed of concrete but only one lane wide. That way the money went twice as far, since passing vehicles could each keep two wheels on the concrete—better than having four wheels in the mud. According to Dancy, "We had to get the farmers out of the mud and in to the market places." When other counties saw their roads deteriorating during the money-short Depression, "Dancy's sidewalks" held up.

In-the 1930s and 1940s, Judge Dancy worked for flood control and water conservation. He was a strong proponent of the Water Treaty of 1944 with Mexico that led to construction of Falcon Dam. He persuaded Cameron County to fund the Anzalduas Dam in Hidalgo County despite Hidalgo County's failures to participate. A long-time supporter of the concept of Padre Island National Seashore, Dancy saw his dream fulfilled in the latter days of his administration. He also worked for the development of South Padre Island, including the first causeway to the island.

Oscar Dancy was able to achieve his policy goals because he was a successful politician. He knew how to relate to his constituents primarily because he liked people. A typical visit to Rio Hondo involved the judge leaving his ride at one end of the main street, then walking through town greeting everyone and asking about their families by name. His gifts of money to the poor came from the heart even if they had political benefits. Throughout his life Judge Dancy was die-hard Democrat, as essential position in one-

party Texas. He was known to answer his phone, "This is Oscar Dancy, the Democrat."

Toward the end of his career Judge Dancy was still proposing innovative development projects, including desalinization of Rio Grande delta land and a fresh-water canal from East Texas. He lived alone, rising at 4:30 am to cook his breakfast and walk to the bus stop on his way to the courthouse. He had out-lived nearly all his family. "I miss my family more than I can tell...", he said. "It's an awful thing, you know, with them all gone. But I cherish their memory."

Oscar Dancy died only ten days after leaving office. He had lived lonely years devoted to good government in Cameron County. When he finally laid down his burden, his reason for living had ended. But his legacy endures in the Oscar Dancy Building and the county he served so long and so well.

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Francesco Voltaggio and the Port Isabel Shrimp Industry

by

Virginia Voltaggio Wood

Everyone has a story to tell of their life, accomplishments and experiences. Of course, no story is told without understanding the individuals who influenced one's life. Such is the case for my father, Francesco Voltaggio, and his story. His father, Vincenzo Voltaggio was born and reared in the small village of Voltaggio, Italy, outside of Genoa. His ancestors were among those who had originally settled in the area and were considered to be of both wealth and high social status. In the summers, the family would travel to Sicily and spend time basking in the sun along the beautiful beaches. Vincenzo grew into a tall, light complexioned man with dark hair and deep blue eyes. It was there, in Sicily, that, as a young man, he met Vincenza Vivona, a beautiful young girl with auburn hair, olive skin and deep brown eyes. Vincenza grew up outside of Palermo in the small village of Califatima. As it is with young love, they courted and were married. Vincenza was 14 and Vincenzo was 20. They were legally married in Sicily. It was during Vincenzo's late teenage years that both of his parents died leaving everything to his oldest brother, which was typical of Italian families in those times. Although educated, none of the children from the Voltaggio family had ever worked as they lived off of the family fortune. The oldest brother enjoyed his life of leisure, which consisted of travel, gambling, and socializing with the elite. It didn't take long for the family wealth to be lost in such a lifestyle. It quickly became apparent to Vincenzo and his new wife that his fortune would only be attained by moving to the wonderful world of the United States, where, it was believed, the streets were paved with gold and there was plenty for those who sought a better life.¹

Therefore, Vincenzo, who was educated in Italy as an engineer, left his trade to immigrate to the US. It was around 1900, and the port of entry was through Ellis Island. Not knowing English, and being a recent immigrant, Vincenzo was lucky to have work in construction, along with many of his Italian friends. He saved his money, and he established a home for Vincenza in Newark, New Jersey. Vincenza traveled with one brother to the United States about a year and half after Vincenzo's arrival. They were married by the Catholic Church immediately upon her arrival. Vincenzo and Vincenza began their life together, working hard and saving money as best they could, while still continuing to have a child every two years until the eighth child, a son, was born. They had seven sons and one daughter. While on a construction job, Vincenzo had an accident and died. Vincenza, although heartbroken, continued to raise eight children, the youngest around sixteen months old, with the occasional help of her brother and other family members. Francesco, third from the youngest (and my father-to-be), was four years old when his father died. Once Francesco started school, his teachers changed his name to Francis. Later he asked to be called Frank. He, along with all of his siblings, learned the English language in school and spoke Italian with their mother at home. Frank took on many jobs to assist with the household expenses. He started shining shoes at age six, but that lasted a short time as he did not like getting his hands dirty with the shoe polish. Even then, he maintained a standard of personal grooming. As an adult, Francesco would tell his children that one could always tell a gentlemen by the way he keeps his hands and shoes. If they were clean, it was a sign that he took pride in himself. Francesco's mother and uncles communicated to all the Voltaggio children that they had come from ancestors of social status. Although poor, they should always take pride in their heritage. They were proud to be Italian-Americans.

Assimilation into the dominant American culture was important to all the Voltaggio family. Frank would later tell his children the following story to illustrate the gradual assimilation process.

Vincenza would sew all of the boy's clothes. Their shirts were made in the same style she was accustomed to making in Italy, with long pointed collars. Frank and his brothers would complain about the style and request that she make American style shirts, in an effort to appear more American. Frank would comment to his mother, "Mom, I look like I just stepped off the boat from Italy."

Frank continued to work when and where possible. He worked, around the ages of six to twelve, for one of his uncles (Vivona, his mother's brother) in a tailor shop and, as a teenager, for another uncle (Voltaggio) in the ice cream business at the New Jersey shore. His payment for working in the tailor shop was a new suit once a year. Of course, the suit was made large for him so he could grow into it by the end of the year. During this time, Frank needed a suit, as he frequently accompanied one of his uncles to the Metropolitan Opera. It would not be proper for a young man to attend the opera in anything less suitable. By the time Frank entered into his teenage years, it was evident he was well liked, handsome, and very social. He was a Boy Scout, and he worked as a life guard during the summers. As he entered into adulthood he was ambitious and not afraid to try new adventures in business. He worked at Fulton Fish Market in New York selling fish and fresh vegetables he imported from Florida. At that time, the Fulton Fish Market was controlled by various Italian families. Since Frank was an Italian, he was accepted and protected from the other ruffians. He bought trucks that would transport fresh vegetables from Florida in exchange for fish from New York. This was before freezer trucks, and he would put ice in the trucks with fans to keep the vegetables fresh from Florida to New York for delivery.

It was during one of these trips to Florida that he met Lorene Davidson, who would become his wife. It was during Christmas time that she was introduced to Frank through a mutual friend. Frank mentioned that he was all alone and she invited him to her apartment for Christmas dinner. They were married a year later, and she moved to New Jersey to learn to become an Italian wife

and homemaker. Lorene was born and raised in Arkansas and had no idea what it meant to be an Italian. She was raised on a farm, and her southern charm and soft spoken voice was equally as foreign to a large, loud Italian family. There could not have been any two individual people more culturally different than Frank and Lorene, but Lorene fought for acceptance into the family. Although Frank's mother would have preferred her son to have married an Italian girl, she eventually could not resist Lorene's loving ways and accepting attitude. Vincenza (who later became known as Jenny) taught Lorene Italian cooking and Italian ways. Today one would think that Lorene was herself an Italian.

Frank and Lorene and their two daughters (Wanda and Virginia – myself) lived down the street from Vincenza (Jenny). This living arrangement made it easy for Lorene and the children to learn the Italian customs and have daily contact with Frank's family. Virginia, the youngest daughter, at age three, would walk down the street every morning to Nonna's house, have cappuccino and Italian cookies, and spend the day with her. Vincenza (Jenny) and Lorene grew in love and respect for one another and it was difficult to part when Frank decided to move his family to Orange, Texas, to venture into the shrimp industry. Vincenza would go to visit Frank's family once while they were in Orange, Texas. She said it reminded her of her home in Sicily. Vincenza's kind and strong spirit and her devotion to family was a major influence on all of her children and grandchildren, but especially in the life of Virginia, who spent so much time with her in her early years.

It was during the family's four year stay in Orange that Frank learned shrimping. The shrimp industry is composed of two main categories: the production and sales of the product and the fisherman. Frank's primary interest was in the processing, sales and production part of the industry. He also learned about the shrimping potential of Brownsville, Point Isabel, and Mexico. In the late 1940's Frank bought a shrimp processing plant in Tampico, Mexico. Lorene and the two girls stayed in Orange, Texas, while Frank commuted back and forth to Tampico. Business was good

and the industry was thriving. The business did so well that the Mexican Government decided to take over this business owned by a US citizen. Frank and several of the men working for him were lucky enough to get away from the soldiers by jumping on board a large vessel and making their way into the Gulf of Mexico headed for the coast of Texas. Frank, who had prospered from the Mexican venture, had now lost everything. To add to their depression in losing the business, they were in the Gulf of Mexico during hurricane season and went through a terrible storm. Their saving grace was the structure of the vessel. Frank had bought a large mine sweeper from the US government and turned it into a shrimping vessel. It had a steel hull and was twice as long as a regular shrimp boat. The sturdiness of the vessel made it possible for them to ride out the storm.

In 1949, Frank began his career in the shrimp industry again, in Brownsville, Texas. He established a processing plant in one of the old barracks at Fort Brown. He bought shrimp from Mexico; crossed them into the US; processed, boxed them in his brand name, Valley Pride, and shipped the boxes in trucks to Detroit, Michigan, and New York. With this step, the shrimp processing industry came to Brownsville for the first time. Frank's family, Lorene and the two girls, moved to Brownsville in 1950.

Frank found a house in a new subdivision called Riverside. However, it was not long after that he bought an acre and half of land on Old Port Isabel Road that became their home for many years. The original home was small, with only two bedrooms, but that quickly changed as they added to it and redecorated it. Lorene worked at home and made it a place where the smells of Italian cooking filled the air and caring for the family was her greatest joy. There was also plenty of land for Wanda, my older sister, to care for her horse. Wanda enjoyed riding and did so in many of the Charro Days parades. I enjoyed playing in the land that surrounded the home. All in all, it was a happy time for the Voltaggio family as Frank worked hard in establishing his new business, Valley Pride. The family would move one more time in Brownsville, in

1962, when they built their home on a Resaca in what was known as Sandy Acres. Frank was very proud of his new home and especially proud of his tomato plants and fig tree. According to Frank, these were essentials for an Italian home. Frank was active in the Brownsville community and was a member of several organizations. He was President of the Kiwanis, President of the Texas Shrimp Association, President of the Shrimp Producers Association, and President of the Propeller Club. He participated in the Charro Days parade, was in the Brush Court, and (with Lorene) belonged to the Serape Club where authentic Mexican costumes were worn at social events. Lorene gave back to the community as well. She was a member of the hospital auxiliaries, Girl Scouts, and the Self Culture Club, as well as organizing the Catholic Daughter's Society in her home and the Women's Alter Society for Sacred Heart Church.

The processing plant grew in production, and, within two years, Frank had become partners with Oliver Clark (whom he had met at a seafood conference) in establishing Valley Frozen Foods. They moved the company to Port Isabel and bought up several acres of land along the port entry. It was also at this time, around 1953-1954, that the Brownsville Harbor for fishing boats was built at the Brownsville Port. It was the first U. S. harbor devoted solely to fishing boats.² Oliver, who was from Alabama, moved his wife and four daughters to Brownsville to work with Frank in their new company. They both traveled to Port Isabel everyday from Brownsville to oversee the business. The company grew fast, and the processing plant was in an ideal location, as the various boats would dock right up to the plant, and the shrimp would be loaded onto conveyer belts to be headed, sorted, frozen and shipped throughout the United States.

Valley Frozen Foods soon became a well-known name in the Port Isabel community. When the boats would arrive at the dock, the company would sound a loud horn to alert the people that the boats were in and the workers were needed at the plant. Within thirty minutes, all the workers would be at their various job lo-

cations ready to begin processing the shrimp. In peak season, Valley Frozen Foods employed 300 people. During normal working times, 150 people were employed. The women would work on heading the shrimp, and picking out the inferior ones as they moved along a conveyer belt. Women also worked at monitoring the shrimp as they were sorted by size and dropped into various boxes. The men worked at the heavier jobs of moving the boxed shrimp into the freezer and loading the shrimp on to the conveyer belts. There was a definite gender division of labor. Valley Frozen Foods was the first company in the Valley to use nitrogen for quick freezing the shrimp. The shrimp were kept in large freezers and shipped out to various parts of the United States.

Everyday, the price of shrimp was set by the New York and Chicago buyers. Valley Frozen Foods was in contact with them, and would pass on the set price to the other companies in the Port Isabel area. The price was consistent for all of the local companies within a penny or two. Valley Frozen Foods received many calls from local companies, checking on the daily price of shrimp since it was, during the 1950s and 1960s, the largest operation in Port Isabel. Valley Frozen Foods would, in its turn, check with other large companies to compare prices. The price was based on the volume of shrimp available. If there was less shrimp, the price was higher; if there was more shrimp, the price was lower. It was a market-driven economy.³ Companies also assessed needs, which include their various costs of operation including a profit margin.⁴ The large multinationals agreed before making the bids on what the prices would be.⁵ This agreed price became the price set for all shrimp along the Texas coast.

As Frank and Oliver expanded, they started buying shrimp boats. Most of the boats had Valley in the name: Valley Star, Valley Sun, Valley Moon, etc. The brand name on the shrimp boxes remained Valley Pride. At one time during the 1960s, Valley Frozen Foods had the largest privately-owned shrimp fleet in the Brownsville, Port Isabel area.⁶ However, there were problems with maintaining the boats in top working order. The crew of a shrimp boat was

composed of captain, rigger, and header, and the boat used either thirty-six or forty-five-foot-long nets. The boats were wooden or steel-hulled trawlers measuring, most commonly, from fifty to eighty feet long. Wooden “doors” kept the mouths of the nets open as the tickler chains at the bottom of the nets stirred up the shrimp and drove them in. During the 1950s and 1960s, the captain and crew repaired the nets and any other equipment on the boat.⁷ Frank discovered that, if he made the captain part owner of the boat, the captain had a vested interest in keeping the boat running efficiently. This also gave the captain a larger cut of the profits. Frank and Oliver then began implementing a new way for captains to eventually own their own boats. All Frank asked was that the captains continue to bring their catches to Valley Frozen Foods. By this time, there were several other companies along the wharf, giving competition for Valley Frozen Foods. However, Valley Frozen Foods would custom pack for some companies, using boxes with other brand names. They also had a contract to pack shrimp for the US Army. Frank would often comment that the Army paid well but were demanding throughout the processing of the shrimp, from the time it was unloaded from the boats to when it was processed and delivered. An Army representative was on site to monitor everything. Frank mentioned that he took pride in supplying the Army, in spite of the difficulties, because it spoke well of his company’s product.

Although Valley Frozen Foods was doing very well in the 1950s and 1960s, Oliver decided to take his family and return home to Alabama, so, in the early 1970s, Frank bought out Oliver’s interest in the company. During the mid 1950s, Frank’s brothers Antonio and Morris had come to Brownville to work for Frank. Antonio (Tony) was an accountant and office manager, and Morris worked in the business with Frank until he was able to set up his own unloading and dock facility in Port Isabel in the late 1960s.⁸ After Oliver returned to Alabama, Frank decided to try investing in Mexico again. In the 1970s, he connected with an operation located in Tampico and Campeche, Mexico. Since

he had learned about the difficulties in business dealings with Mexico from his previous experiences, he was not about to make the same mistakes. His partners were Mexican citizens, and the value of the partnership was to have another source of shrimp, so that he bought all of the shrimp from the two Mexican plants. This arrangement worked out very well until around the late 1970s, when the Mexican government nationalized all of the Mexican shrimp boats and industry. This meant that the partners in Mexico lost everything, which diminished the amount of shrimp Frank could receive.⁹ It had been a good run for Frank's company while it lasted. The Mexicans enjoyed Frank's outgoing personality and his command of the Spanish language (though sprinkled with Italian accents and words). Frank held the Mexican culture in high regard, and he taught his children to do the same. He took his family to Mexico on several trips, and he noted many similarities between his Italian heritage and the Mexican culture, especially in regards to love of family.

Louisiana fishing families also contributed greatly to the shrimp-ing industry, gradually bringing their boats to fish off the Texas coast in the 1950s. They were hard-working people who added much to the booming economy. Most of them saw the move as a way to become more independent and express their entrepreneurial spirit.¹⁰ As they grew in numbers, they became another source of products for Valley Frozen Foods. Frank welcomed the Cajun shrimpers, and quickly established a working relationship with them. Many of them moved their families to the Brownsville-Port Isabel area, where they remain today.

At various times throughout Frank's life, he tried to bring family members into the business. In the mid to late 1960s, his son-in-law (Wanda's husband) worked for Frank. This arrangement lasted for about three years. Two of Frank's brothers, Sabastiano (Don) from the New Jersey area and Geseppi (Joe) from California, moved to Brownsville to learn the business, but decided it was not the type of work they wanted. Again, in the 1970s, Frank's son-in-law, my husband, John Wood, came to help him in the business.

The shrimp industry was still booming, and as Frank grew older he needed people he could depend on to help run the business. John worked with Frank the longest, and he eventually became President of the company. However, when Frank saw that the business was no longer doing well, he encouraged John to move into another line of work. It was painful for John to leave Frank, as he loved and admired him. In the 1980s, shortly after John left, Frank sold the business and retired.

The shrimp industry had been booming in the 1960s. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the US started adding restrictions to U.S. boats entering Mexican waters. Texas shrimpers typically fished for up to three or more weeks in the Gulf before returning to port. Shrimpers must fish at night, since the brown shrimp (*Penaeus aztecus*) – the most common type of shrimp found in the Gulf of Mexico off the Texas coast – is nocturnal. The brown shrimp are light brown in color uncooked and strong pink when cooked. White shrimp (*Panaeus setiferus*) are also common in the Gulf of Mexico, are more gray than white, and turn pink when cooked. The third type of shrimp caught in the Gulf (mostly off the Mexican coast) is Rock shrimp. These deep-water shrimp have a very hard shell, and are sweet-tasting. The meat turns red and white when cooked.¹¹

Work on a shrimp boat is arduous and, at times, dangerous. The header's major responsibility is to sit on a small stool on the rear work deck and remove the heads from the thousands of shrimp that are netted. The rigger cleans and repairs the nets and helps the header. The captain is the backbone of the shrimp industry, responsible for finding and netting the shrimp and returning them and his men safely to port. Gulf crews are primarily composed of Caucasians, Mexican Americans, and undocumented Mexican workers. Blacks, Cajuns, and Central Americans represent most of the remainder of the workforce. The median income of Gulf trawler captains in 1979 was \$22,400, while riggers received \$13,200 and headers \$6,400.¹² Since 1979, the Texas shrimp industry has been beset by a number of economic problems, including the pro-

hibition of fishing in Mexican waters, rising fuel costs, an increase in the number of trawlers, concerns over the accidental killing of sea turtles, and overcapitalization.¹³ In the 1990s, shrimpers faced new concerns of competition and ethnic conflicts with newly-settled Vietnamese immigrants and increased federal regulations, such as turtle excluder devices for nets, supported by environmental groups.¹⁴ All in all, most shrimpers and processors feel that the U.S. government has failed to support their industry.¹⁵

At the present time, the shrimp industry no longer exists as Frank and others once knew it. Shrimp are being raised in ponds, often (through international trade agreements) in Japan, Vietnam, Mexico, and other countries. Those individuals who have hung on to their vessels cannot compete with the new technology of big business. Captains of vessels which once had abundant workers ready to go out fishing now have to search and plead for boat hands. The captain who once did everything on the boat from fixing the engine to repairing the nets must now hire a specialist to carry out those tasks. Pride in one's work has been subordinated to the desire for a paycheck.¹⁶

The building where Valley Frozen Foods once thrived in Port Isabel is still there –its name faintly legible on the outside wall. It is indeed a sad place. Most of the old timers have gone, and few real fishermen exist. All that remains are memories of names like Frank Voltaggio, Morris Voltaggio, Julius Collins, the Lasaigne brothers, Luis Lapayre, Roy Callaway, the Zimmerman brothers, the Boddens, Guy Pete, Vergil Versaggi, and Will Hardee and brothers, to mention a few. These were giant men who believed in hard work, family, and faith. Nothing could be stronger to them than a man's word. We salute these people of a by-gone era for their contribution to the shrimp industry and for the legacy they have left behind.

University of Texas at Brownville

Endnotes

- 1 Interview by Virginia Wood with Lorene Voltaggio, 8 March 2009.
- 2 Interview by Virginia Wood with Julius Collins, 4 March 2009.
- 3 Interview by Virginia Wood with John Wood, 3 April 2009.
- 4 Robert Lee Maril, *Texas Shrimpers' Community, Capitalism, and the Sea*. (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1983).
- 5 Maril, p.158.
- 6 Interview by Virginia Wood with John Wood, 3 April 2009.
- 7 Interview by Virginia Wood with Julius Collins, 4 March 2009.
- 8 Interview by Virginia Wood with John Wood, 3 April 2009.
- 9 Interview by Virginia Wood with John Wood, 3 April 2009.
- 10 Interview by Virginia Wood with Julius Collins, 4 March 2009.
- 11 W. L. Griffin, "Economic and Financial Analysis of Increasing Costs in the Gulf Shrimp Fleet," *Fishery Bulletin*, 74 (1976), 301-309.
- 12 *The Handbook of Texas Online: Shrimping Industry*. Retrieved March 5, 2009, from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/dxc2 .html>
- 13 *The Handbook of Texas Online: Shrimping Industry*. Retrieved March 5, 2009, from <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/dxc2 .html>
- 14 *Dallas Morning News* (April 23, 1992). Shrimpers slam report showing benefit of turtle-saving device. Retrieved March 5, 2009 from <http://dallasnews/shrimping industry/online/article/OED 3D234CiD3475/html>.
- 15 *Dallas Morning News* (April 23, 1992). Shrimpers slam report showing benefit of turtle-saving device. Retrieved March 5, 2009 from <http://dallasnews/shrimping industry/online/article/OED 3D234CiD3475/html>.
- 16 Interview by Virginia Wood with Julius Collins, 4 March 2009.

Mario Barrera A Border Success Story

by

Milo Kearney

I first encountered Mario Barrera as a fellow undergraduate geology student at the University of Texas at Austin in the late 1950s. Tall, soft-spoken, exceptionally articulate, and endowed with a whimsical sense of humor, he was clearly slated for success. But this was the period just prior to the Civil Rights breakthrough, and his path to achievement would be a difficult one until that movement came into its own.

Mario made a stimulating study partner, who liked to draw me off into discussions about such topics as philosophy and politics. We soon became friends, visiting Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina together during one spring break and Mexico and Guatemala (with another close college friend, Burns Taylor) during a summer vacation. The undergraduate geology program required a field course in the final summer before graduating. In 1960, Mario and I enrolled in the field course offered jointly by Columbia University and the University of Wyoming in Wyoming's Snowy Range. In July, after the field course had ended, we drove through the Western U. S. and Canada (with me having to fight off the efforts of girls, met on the way, to recruit Mario for their own itineraries) before taking courses in the second summer session at the University of California at Berkeley. Little did we know that we would both return to Berkeley, later, for graduate studies in other disciplines.

Nor did Mario know that discrimination would close the door to his first chosen career in geology, while the Civil Rights Movement would play a role in opening doors for him in a totally different direction. At U.T. – Austin, I was given a glimpse of the barriers Mario was up against when, despite being an outstanding student,

he was not chosen for initiation into the Sigma Gamma Epsilon National Geology Honor Fraternity. I remonstrated with the President of the UT-Austin chapter, only to be told that not everyone was welcome. Given Mario's universal popularity, charm, and courtesy, there could be little doubt that ethnic prejudice was at work. However, the Berkeley campus – alive with excitement over John F. Kennedy's campaign for U. S. President with its promise of better treatment of minorities – pointed the way to a more equitable future for Mario and for Latinos in general.

That Mario was able to surmount the difficulties is explained in part by his family roots in the Rio Grande Valley. His parents were both educated people who encouraged his academic achievement. Mario's mother, Elena Farías, had been born in 1910 in Mier, Tamaulipas – the town attacked by Texas raiders under William Fisher in December 1842, where the famous drawing of the white and black beans (to decide which of the Texan prisoners were to be shot) had taken place in 1843. Elena's father was an itinerant Methodist minister, so that her brothers and sisters were born in different cities. Her maternal grandfather, Joseph Jonathan Austin, had been born on the Isle of Man. As a second son, not in line to inherit, he became a medical doctor and emigrated, via the United States, to Mexico. There he married a Mexican woman, who also had some Celtic blood. He also made the acquaintance of President Porfirio Díaz. As a result, after the Mexican Revolution broke out, he was placed on a list of people slated to be executed. He escaped this fate by fleeing to the United States, taking with him members of his family, including Elena, then three-years-old, and her parents.¹

Elena's parents eventually settled in Mission, Texas. It was there that Mario's future father, Pedro Barrera (born in 1903), met her. His father, Pedro Barrera, a pharmacist, had been born on La Reforma Ranch, about thirty miles north of the Rio Grande Valley, near McCook, Texas. This historic ranch had been founded ca. 1900. A documentary about the ranch has been videotaped. Pedro's father, Cayetano Barrera, had married a daughter of the

Guerra family that had founded the ranch. The Guerras had named the ranch for the Protestant Reformation. The surrounding ranches were all named after Catholic saints, and the Guerras, who were Methodists, may have given their ranch this name as a way of ribbing their neighbors. After a long courtship, Pedro and Elena married and had four sons in succession, of whom Mario was the oldest, born in Mission on 8 November 1939. Pedro became a pharmacist, and Elena a school teacher.

Regarding his early education in Mission, Mario recalled ...

My mother, being a teacher, taught me how to read before I started to school. So I had my own Head Start Program. We were not allowed to speak Spanish at school, neither in class nor even on the school grounds. I was already bilingual, so it was no problem for me, but for some of the other kids, it was. I had learned Spanish first and then English. I was originally dominant in Spanish and, later, dominant in English.

Discrimination against Latinos was manifested in other ways, as well, during Mario's early years in Mission, he recalled. Latinos were not allowed to swim in the town's only swimming pool – which was privately owned. Dating across ethnic lines was also taboo. The same prejudice awaited Mario beyond Mission as he moved into his higher education. Even though he graduated from Mission High School as valedictorian of his class, his application to Rice Institute (now Rice University) was turned down, with no reason given. Instead he attended the University of Texas at Austin – his mother's *alma mater*. He majored in geology, with the idea of using his bilingualism to obtain a job in the Venezuelan oil industry. But his B.S. in geology in 1961 failed to bring him a job. Instead, he was told that there was a glut of geologists.

Having reached a dead end in his geology aspirations, Mario decided to get a Masters Degree in Political Science and apply to enter the Foreign Service. He was told by a University of Texas

government professor that the University of California at Berkeley would make a good choice of graduate school, so he applied and was accepted there. Even though he had previously taken a summer course at U. Cal – Berkeley, Mario stated that his familiarity with the university did not influence his choice.

Mario received his Masters Degree in 1963. At Berkeley, Mario had met Sue Corlett, who also graduated from the university. They married in 1965, and their son, Miguel Luis, would be born in 1970. Mario took time off from 1964 to 1966 to teach at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky.

When Mario returned to Berkeley, the campus had become a central item in the international news for its political activism, starting with the Free Speech Movement in the fall of 1964. Berkeley students were caught up in an attempt to reform society through demonstrations, and Mario found time to turn from his studies to join in. He participated in the great Sproul Hall “Mill-in” around 1967 or 1968. The students did not want to sit down for fear they would be arrested, so they just milled around in this administrative building. He also made his way down Telegraph Avenue to Oakland on 20 October 1967 to join in the climax of “Stop-the-Draft Week” by demonstrating in front of the local Army induction center. He described the scene as follows:

There had been a lot of violence that week, with the police attacking demonstrators. The last day, Friday, thousands of demonstrators descended on the center, but the police blocked access, so the people weren't able to get there. The environment was pretty chaotic.

Mario's outlook put him in sympathy with the student movement. He cautions, “I would ask people to follow their own instinct and to be skeptical of anything that has the voice of authority attached to it.”

In 1970, after doing dissertation research in Argentina on Argentine politics, Mario received a Ph.D. in Political Science. His first post-doctorate job, in the 1970-1971 academic year, was as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Chicano Studies at the University of California at Riverside. From 1971 to 1976, he taught as an Assistant Professor at the University of California at San Diego. There he taught both Political Science and Chicano Studies, and did research in Chicano politics. From 1974 to 1976, he served as Director of the Chicano Studies Program. He was in the third college created at this university, which was termed Third World College, because it focused on the Third World both within the United States and outside it. In 1976-1977, he was a visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Mario soon began to make an impact on Chicano Studies. He was one of the founders of the National Association for Chicano Studies in 1973, and served on its original coordinating committee in 1973-1974. He was also a member of its Editorial Committee from 1976 to 1978, and served as the chief editor of the first volume of its proceedings. In 1974-1975, he was Vice Chairman of the American Political Science Association Committee on the Status of Chicanos in the Profession. In 1976, he received the first annual award of the Western Political Science Association for the best article or paper on Chicano Politics.

In 1977, he got an offer to join the Berkeley faculty in its Department of Ethnic Studies. He taught both undergraduate and graduate classes. His department was multi-ethnic, and included Latino Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian-American Studies. It was the first Department to grant Ph.D.s in Ethnic Studies. In 1981, Mario was a Woodrow Wilson Summer Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He was a National Research Council Fellow in 1985-1986. He received a Special Recognition Award for the Northern California Region of the National Association for Chicano Studies in 1988. He was given University of California

MEXUS Creative Activity Fellowships in 1989 and 1990 and grants in 1994 and 2001. He was made a NACCS Scholar (a lifetime achievement award from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies) in 1999.

His articles have appeared in *Sociological Perspectives*, *Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*, *Chicanos and Film*, *Sage Race Relations Abstracts*, *Chicano Studies*, *California Sociologist*, *Social Science Journal*, *The New Scholar*, *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, *Aztlán*, *People and Politics in Urban Society*, and *International Organization*.

He wrote two main books, both put out by Notre Dame University Press: *Race and Class in the Southwest* in 1979 and *Beyond Aztlán: Ethnic Autonomy in Comparative Perspective* in 1989. The first book deals with the economic history of the U.S. Southwest from the Mexican-American War to the 1970s. The second book is a comparative study of Latinos in the United States with minorities in four other countries: Canada, China, Nicaragua, and Switzerland. In 1980, Mario received the Ethnic and Cultural Pluralism Award of the American Political Science Association for *Race and Class in the Southwest*. He also wrote *Modernization and Coercion* (Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, Politics of Modernization Monograph Series, 1969), *Information and Ideology: A Study of Arturo Frondizi* (Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics, 1973), and *Action Research: In Defense of the Barrio* (Aztlán Publications, 1974), and co-edited *Mexican Americans and Educational Change* (Arno Press, 1974), *Work, Family, Sex Roles, Language* (Bilingual Press, 1980), and *History, Culture, and Society* (Bilingual Press, 1983)

He also produced four documentary films: *Northwest from Tumacacori* in 1976; *The Party Line*, a short comedy film (which he also wrote and directed) in 1996; *Chicano Park* in 1988; and *Latino Stories of World War II* in 2006. *The Party Line* won third prize in the Berkeley Film/Video Festival's comedy competition. *Chicano Park* tells about the creation of a community park in San Diego.

It won a Golden Eagle, one of the top awards for a documentary, as well as a Best of Northern California Award at the National Film Festival and a Gold Award at the Houston and the Chicago International Film Festivals. *Latino Stories of World War II*, which Mario also directed, tells the stories of four Latino veterans of the Second World War. One was Cuban American, and three were Mexican Americans. One was in the Army, one was in the Marines, and two were pilots. It won the Grand Festival Award at the Berkeley Video and Film Festival and aired on the PBS station KCET in Los Angeles. Mario observed that the role of Latinos in this war is still virtually unknown to the general public.

He also wrote the scripts for four screenplays: *The Black Bird* (1997); *My Life Among the Gopis* (1998), which won the Fourth Annual National Short Screenplay Competition; *Blue Shadows* (1998), which was a finalist at the Sundance Screenplay Competition; and *Kitty and Shep* (co-written with Kathy Parish, 2000).

Mario retired from Berkeley with the rank of Professor Emeritus in 2000. He actively campaigned to help elect Barack Obama President. He is presently writing an autobiographical novel, and is enjoying salsa dancing in his spare time.

Mario has urged me not to draw any moral from his story. He has reminded me that our geological training should have left us with a humbling perspective of the brevity of the human record in the story of the Earth. And so I will end this article by simply recalling three pictures: of the talented but marginalized UT undergraduate student; of the politically-invigorated Berkeley graduate student; and of the accomplished film-making and salsa-dancing scholar and author of today. These vignettes I will leave – frozen in time – like fossils preserved in limestone.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 All the information in this article is based either on Milo Kearney's personal memories or on two telephone interviews of Milo Kearney with Mario Barrera on 10 and 11 April 2009.

FAMILY HISTORY



Selected Figures from the Sierra/Valerio Family History

by

Luciano Valerio Sierra and Amy Sierra Frazier

In the 1700s, Sierra family ancestors sailed the seas from Italy and Spain, arrived in the New World as pioneers, and settled in the Rio Grande Valley under Spanish rule.¹ Giovanni Bautista Chappell, an Italian from Genoa (called Juan Bautista Chapa by Spanish-speakers), led settlers from Camargo (itself just founded in 1749) in establishing a colony in Mier in 1752. For Chapa's service, Carlos III of Spain awarded him a land grant of 350,000 acres, whereas the other colonists owned about 100 acres that they used for ranching and farming.

When Spanish colonists settled in Camargo, they transported all of their livestock, such as their horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens from the Port of Santander in northern Spain to the newly established colonies. After stopping in Jamaica to replenish their supplies and water, they sailed on to the mouth of the Rio Grande River, where an extensive palm jungle grew on both sides of the river. Later, this jungle became known as the famous Sabal Palms – a species of palms which grew nowhere else except in the delta of this river.

Their three ships came into the mouth of the river, where the Spaniards established a small colony called Puerto Bagdad. Many colonists moved to a place called La Burrita, also on the banks of the river, but on higher ground. La Burrita became one of the two main centers of the population, alongside Camargo. The Spaniards used the river as a water highway to travel back and forth, including for trading, with Camargo as a supply point on the land route between San Antonio and Monterrey.

Ships from Spain docked on Corpus Christi Bay to trade with San Antonio. Spaniards established a land route from Corpus Christi to Refugio, Goliad, Sinton, and Gonzalez to San Antonio. These cities were about fifty miles apart from each other, so that it would take a stagecoach one day to travel between each of them before arriving in San Antonio. As many of the original colonists who came to the Rio Grande Valley and Tamaulipas were from Santander, Spain, they named the new colonies Nuevo Santander.

Before arriving in the new colonies, our ancestors lived in a huge valley in south-central Santander, called the *Valle de Callón*. In 1966-1967, we had the privilege of visiting some of our distant relatives in Spain in the village of Penagos. One of our ancestors was the above-mentioned Juan Chapa (Giovanni Chappell). Juan prospered and had many sons and daughters. The king of Spain granted Remigio Chapa, one of Juan's sons, a land grant covering 2 ½ million square rods in the lower Rio Grande Valley. The northern boundary of his land went up to the Rio Grande River; the eastern boundary extended to the Gulf of Mexico; the western boundary ended at the land grant of El Gomenio; and the southern boundary went to the Laguna Madre.

Selected Sierras in the Rio Grande Valley

Luciano Sierra's paternal lineage from the Sierra family includes the following ancestors.

1. Savas Gregorio de la Sierra: In the early 1800s, Savas Gregorio de la Sierra, along with Francisco Larrasquitu and Felipe Madraso, left Santander, sailing first to Cuba and then on to their final destination at Puerto Bagdad. Remigio Chapa hired these three men as ranch hands to work on his land at Camargo. Later, Savas Gregorio de la Sierra married Doña Rosa Chapa Cisneros, the daughter of Remigio Chapa. (People from La Burrita and Carmargo often intermarried, and Remigio Chapa had married Maria Cisneros at La Burrita.) Savas Gregorio de la Sierra's marriage to Doña Rosa Chapa Cisneros launched the Sierra family in the New World.

2. Lorenzo Sierra Chapa: Lorenzo Sierra Chapa, as the first born son of Savas Gregorio de la Sierra – by the law of the primogeniture prevailing in Spain and Mexico – received the entire inheritance from his parents. Nonetheless, Lorenzo later divided and distributed the property at his own discretion to each of his siblings when he or she became of age. Lorenzo married Elena Cisneros Flores from La Burrita, by whom he had four children, of whom Rogerio Sierra Flores (Luciano Sierra Valerio's father and Amy Sierra Frazier's grandfather) was the first-born.

3. Rogerio Sierra Flores: Rogerio Sierra Flores married Concepción Valerio Leal, by whom he had eight children. By this marriage, Valerio blood came into the Sierra family line. Concepción's own ancestry will now be traced below.

Selected Valerios in the Rio Grande Valley

Luciano Sierra's maternal lineage from the Valerio family includes the following ancestors.

1. Luciano Valerio, Sr.: The Valerios migrated from Genoa, Italy, to Puerto Bagdad, where Luciano Valerio and his younger brother Macario Valerio lived and worked as shipbuilders and sailors. Luciano married Herlinda Hinojosa, and Macario married her sister Darita. Luciano built a riverboat with a steam engine imported from Spain, and fitted the steam engine to this new boat. It was the first steam-powered, wood-burning, state-of-the-art riverboat, the finest and newest model in river transportation of the period. He carried passengers and cargo from Bagdad all the way up to Carmargo on the Rio Grande River, the water highway of its day. During the American Civil War, the Union navy blockaded Port Isabel and other ports in the Gulf. However, the Confederate forces used the river to ship cotton and other merchandise to Europe, and – more importantly – imported weapons and supplies needed for the Confederate cause. Luciano Valerio's steamboat carried cargo and passengers that were sailing to and from Europe to aid the Confederacy.

Luciano Valerio's business with Spain and the Confederacy made him a rich and powerful merchant, owning many properties in Matamoros. One day, the people were warned that a huge hurricane was about to strike the Gulf coast in the area of Puerto Bagdad. Not wanting to leave his property and belongings in the Port of Bagdad, Luciano ordered his brother Macario and his brother's wife, along with his wife Herlinda, to board his own ship and head up the river toward Camargo. Unfortunately, Herlinda was about to give birth to their first and only child. To their utter dismay, they left too late, and, as the boat was still sailing upstream, the powerful storm struck. The intensity of the storm surge was so great that it lifted the boat off the river channel and threw it up on the ancient sand dunes. Trapped on the sand dunes in the boat, Herlinda died soon after giving birth to a baby boy. Luciano's brother Macario (nicknamed Papa Macario) and his wife (nicknamed Mama Darita) raised the new-born child.

The powerful storm completely destroyed Puerto Bagdad. Because Luciano Valerio had never left Puerto Bagdad, he perished along with everything he owned. Luciano strapped money belts across his shoulders and across his waist, but – laden with the heavy weight from all the silver and gold coins – not even the exceptional swimming skills he had acquired as a sailor could save him, and he drowned. Papa Macario, along with a search party, went to Bagdad after the hurricane to look for his brother. He was astonished to see Puerto Bagdad totally destroyed. As his party went searching for bodies, they found, buried in a sand dune, a completely decomposed man. They noticed that, on his left hand, he wore a large gold ring with a huge garnet stone. This identified him as Luciano Valerio. Luciano's wife, Herlinda, who also perished during the powerful storm, could not be taken back to Matamoros before her body decomposed, so her family buried her in the sand dunes beside the stranded riverboat where she had given birth to her son. Many years later, the family removed and transported her remains to the family cemetery plot in the old cemetery in Matamoros.

The stranded riverboat remained on the sand dune for a long time, until, one day, a sheep herder, poking around the remains, found an iron ball. When he broke it open, he found a fortune in silver and gold coins, which had apparently belonged to Luciano. In the olden days, people with valuables used iron balls as stronghold safes. Excitement from the news of the sheep herder's discovery spread rapidly throughout La Burrita, but, soon after this incident, the sheep herder vanished into the night – never to be seen or heard from again.

2. Luciano Valerio, Jr.: After the hurricane, Macario and Darita moved to Matamoros, where they lived in one of the many properties they owned, rearing their newly adopted child. They named the baby boy Luciano, after his father. When the boy grew up, he, too, became a carpenter and boat builder. He met and married Susana Leal, daughter of a rich landowner of Linares, Nuevo Leon. Luciano was one of the carpenters who constructed the Brownsville/Matamoros railroad bridge (completed in 1910). He and Susana had five children, of whom Concepción (Luciano Sierra's mother and Amy Sierra Frazier's grandmother) was the eldest. Francisco was their fourth child and only son.

3. Francisco Valerio: When Concepción's brother, Francisco, became a man, he came to own five sailboats that he used for fishing in the Laguna Madre in Mexico. He had a fish truck that many would describe with awe and wonder as the granddaddy of all SUVs. It had great big tractor tires; the axles of the truck measured at about four feet off the ground. It could travel between the Laguna Madre and Matamoros at a time when no paved roads existed. It operated as an all-terrain vehicle that could travel through the mud and the sand. He constructed this magnificent vehicle himself, for he was known to be a great mechanic. He had an insulated cargo box that stored ice, in which he could load two tons of fish in the truck. He sold all his fish in Brownsville.

Francisco led a bold and adventurous life. At age fifteen, at the onset of the 1917 Mexican Revolution, he hitched a ride on a

freight train heading to Mexico City. During a train stop in a small village, the ruling military captured Francisco, along with three other men traveling with him, considering them all to be rebels. They were taken by the commanding colonel of the regiment, who ordered them to be executed. The next morning, the commanding officer, prepared to go to a very important meeting, got into his model T Ford staff car, but the driver of the vehicle could not get it started. They tried everything they could possibly think of to get it started, but all efforts failed. Furious at this unexpected mishap, the colonel vented all his fury and frustration on the condemned prisoners by asking his soldiers, "Why are the prisoners still alive?" He ordered the prisoners to be executed immediately. On the threshold of death, fifteen-year-old Francisco bravely told the colonel with an air of confidence, "I can get your car started." The colonel looked at the young boy, scoffed at him, and skeptically said, "Young boy, if you can get my car started, we will let you and your three friends go free, but how ridiculous that one so young could even fathom how to start a motor vehicle." The soldiers led Francisco to the staff car, but the doubting colonel, shaking his head, did not believe the young man capable of this mechanical task. Francisco checked the coils, magnetos, and the spark. He determined that the problem resulted in the car not having enough spark to ignite the fuel. After a few adjustments, he cranked the motor, and, miraculously, the engine came to life like a roaring lion. Elated, the colonel appointed the boy as the new chief mechanic and driver of the commanding officer. He also ordered the other three young men to be set free. Francisco spent the rest of the revolution driving for the commanding officer. After the war ended, the colonel released Francisco to go back home to his beloved family. He immediately returned to his fishing career.

Francisco's wife, Eloisa Peña, died when their sons Ángel and Jorge were ten and nine years old, and his sister Concepción (then married to Rogerio Sierra) took the two boys into her care – even though she already had eight children of her own to care for. Then, when Concepción's sister Juanita also died, soon after, the

compassionate Concepción also raised Juanita's two daughters, Susana, ten years old, and Rafaela, eight.

Conclusion

The genealogical backgrounds of the old families of the Rio Grande Valley are replete with stories of this sort. The efforts of such overseas settlers, shipping entrepreneurs, builders, survivors of the Mexican Revolution, and good Samaritans have made the region what it is today.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnote

1 The information in this article is based on information passed down by family members as recalled by Luciano Valerio Sierra and written down by Amy Sierra Frazer.

The Cisneros Family in the History of Raymondville

by

Ruby Cisneros Casteel

Hearing a knock on the door, Francisco Asis Cisneros opened it, only to be shot and killed. Neither the assailant nor the reason for the murder was ever learned. An old, typed note given to Raul Eugenio Cisneros says that Francisco Asis Cisneros was interred at Las Rucias toward Willamar in now Willacy County. His burial site has not been located.

It is likely that Francisco was killed between March 1890 and 15 July 1895, when his wife, Estefana, purchased 200 acres from Vicente Davila's *La Jara* Ranch in Hidalgo County for 205 Mexican "coin dollars." The deed describes Estefana as a widow. The land, according to the deed, had originally been granted to Vicente Hinojosa by the Crown of Spain. The land had been inherited by Vicente Dávila from his father, Estévan Dávila, who had purchased it from Thaddeus M. Rhodes on 15 May 1879. The deed was delivered and signed on 6 July 1895 by Jesse Dennett, Notary Public of Hidalgo County, and witnessed in the presence of Vicente Dávila and Urbano Anzaldúa. The deed was filed and recorded on 15 July 1895.¹

Estefana Treviño was born in 1845 to Julián Treviño and Josefa Tovar in Reynosa, Mexico. She died on 24 July 1919 and was buried at La Piedad #1 in Raymondville. The occupation of her father, Julián Treviño, is not known, but, on 31 July 1862, he had lent his rifle to help arm the troops under the direction of Ferdovino Tagles. The letter notes that Julián will receive 6.00 pesos, which are to be paid with funds from the Mexican state government.²

Estefana became a widow for a second time when Francisco Asís Cisneros was murdered. She had been previously married to Pedro García Cavazos, on 25 October 1872, at *la Parroquia* of Brownsville. His parents were Julián García and María Bartola Cavazos, an heir of José Narciso Cavazos, the original Grantee of the vast "San Juan de Carricitos Grant" from the King of Spain. They made their home at Rancho Campo Verde, a settlement north of Raymondville. Pedro died as a result of a roping accident at Rancho Campo Verde. He became entangled in the rope and suffered extensive injuries. Pedro's death was an emotional hardship for Estefana and their four young children. María Dolores García Treviño (born 1869) was only nine years old, José García (born 1872), Rafael García (born 1874), and Amalia García Treviño (born 1878 and died 1962).⁵ A Western Union Telegraph Company message was sent to Barbarita G. de Cabazos on 2 March 1877 by Miguel Garcia informing her that her brother, Pedro Garcia was deceased. The death date indicates that their youngest daughter, Amalia was not yet born.⁴

After Francisco's death, Estefana purchased an additional 150 acres of land. She acquired a total of 350 acres and named her ranch, Los Vergeles. The third tract of land (150 acres of land known as San Salvador del Tule, originally given to Juan José Ballí by the Crown of Spain) was purchased for \$300 Mexican pesos by Estefana T. de Cisneros. The land was sold to Estefana from Antonia A. de Rodríguez and her husband Rufino Rodríguez, who inherited the land from her mother, Concepcion Davila, daughter and heir of Doña Francisca de la Fuente, the wife of Don Gregorio Dávila. The deed was witnessed by J. Cavazos N. and again by Urbano Anzaldúa on 1 March 1897.⁵

A letter in family documents addressed to Estefana Treviño at Campo Verde by a nephew of her first husband asking to borrow money suggests (even though Estefana was married at the time to Francisco Cisneros) that she was financially independent. Other letters written to different individuals by Francisco Cisneros with

the approval of his wife ask individuals who owe her money to pay their debts to her.⁶

At the time of Pedro's death, Estefana was 33 years old, and about a year after his death, according to special notations on their marriage license, Estefana Treviño García wed Francisco Asís Cisneros Gutiérrez, son of Francisco Cisneros and Manuela Gutiérrez. They married on 12 August 1878, and Reverend J. Bretault, O.M.I., officiated over the wedding vows. Witnesses were Miguel García, brother of the late Pedro Garcia, and Alejandra Loya.⁷

Estefana and Francisco had two children: Manuel María Cisneros (born 22 September 1880 and died 1918) and Francisco Javier Cisneros (born 1885 and died 1960), both interred at la Piedad No. 1 Cemetery in Raymondville. Manuel María Cisneros was between 10 and 15 years old when his father was murdered. His parents presumably traveled with another couple by horse-driven carriage to the Brownsville's Church of the Immaculate Concepcion to baptize him, on 24 January 1881. His *padrinos* (godparents) were Claudio Leal (a stock raiser⁸) and Guadalupe Palacios de Leal. At the same time padrinos or godparents were Francisco Cisneros and Estefana Trevino acted as the *padrinos* for another child, Concepción Cantú.⁹

Manuel María Cisneros became an itinerant merchant, and during his travels, he met his future wife, María Hilaria Calvillo (born on 13 January 1887 and died on 16 March 1932), the daughter of Eugenio Calvillo, a store keeper at La Coma Ranch.¹⁰ If Manuel María was living with his mother at Rancho Los Vergeles, about 13 miles northwest of Raymondville, he didn't travel too far to meet his future wife.

In 1904, Edward Bureson Raymond organized the Raymond Town and Improvement Company; and a post office was established there. The same year, the railway was granted right-of-way.¹¹ A year later, Manuel married Hilaria, and they made their home in Raymondville. Their first-born child, Estefana or Susana (born 1906) died as an infant. In 1907, their second child Francisco

(born 1907 and died 1931) was born, and they purchased and paid for eight lots in what is now downtown Raymondville. Manuel and Hilaria established a red frame shingle grocery store. Other children soon followed, including Manuel María (born 1909 and died 1977); Raul Eugenio (born 1911 and died 1980); Israel Jose (born 1912 and died 1945); Oscar (died 1952); Leonor (born 1915 and died 1996); Rafael María (born 1917 and died 1992); and Carmen Cisneros (born 1918 and died 1979).

The family was financially stable. Copies of tax records that the family maintained indicate that Manuel M. Cisneros paid \$5.47 in taxes for property with a total value of \$820.00 in January 1911. From the records, it appears that Manuel owned several lots in Raymondville and Lyford. The family life was probably pretty routine, and newspaper articles and other documents refer to Manuel María Cisneros as being an early pioneer in the establishment of Raymondville. The family went to the Catholic Church, and the children attended school.¹²

On November 1918, Manuel María was one of the 20 to 40 million people who succumbed to the influenza epidemic. He died a few months after his baby daughter Carmen was born in June 1918. Only 31 years old and with eight small children, Hilaria continued to operate the grocery store. A few years later, she married Eutiquio Perez, and they had two sons: Eutiquio Perez (born in 1923) and Ricardo Perez (born in 1924). The couple continued to operate the grocery store.

In 1926, through a dramatic event, Hilaria converted from Catholicism to Methodism. Eutiquio, a charter member of the first Mexican Methodist Church of Raymondville, while attending church service on the evening of 10 January 1926, suddenly slumped over with a heart attack, his black hat falling out of his hands and onto the floor.¹⁵ The Bethel Methodist Church of Raymondville archives indicate that Hilaria became a member on 26 June 1926. At the young age of 39, Hilaria was a widow for a

second time, this time with ten children, ranging in age from two to 18, living at home.

In that same year of 1926, two Anglo men – Allen Nichols (a former page in the House of Representatives) and Leonard Swanson (from Washington D.C.) – were subjected to peonage, a practice of making a debtor work until a debt is discharged or paid. Farmers in Raymondville or Willacy County had not previously encountered problems with the practice until these two men, who were considered credible witnesses, brought the peonage practice to light to the federal government. In many instances, victims were charged with vagrancy and forced to work for free as cotton pickers, often under armed guard. Most of those who were charged were Mexican laborers, who were not considered credible. Nichols and Swanson were another matter. Several Willacy County residents were arraigned for violation of federal statutes prohibiting peonage. Among those arraigned were Sheriff Raymond Teller and Deputy Sheriff William Hargrove.¹⁴

During the trial, Deputy Hargrove stated that he had merely charged Nichols and Swanson for vagrancy, but his testimony was not considered reliable or credible. He and the other defendants denied helping farmers to secure free labor, and the trial resulted in convictions for Sheriff Teller, Carl Brandt, Frank Brandt, Justice of the Peace Floyd Dodd, and L.K. Stockwell. Their sentences ranged from one to eighteen months. Three others who had been arraigned were acquitted. Sheriff Teller's testimony was damaging; he even stated in his testimony that some Mexicans begged to be arrested just so that they would have shelter. Additionally, Sheriff Teller and Frank Brandt were tried that year as accessories to the murder of Tomás Núñez and four other men in Willacy County.¹⁵

On Sunday, September 5, 1926, two officers by the name of Louis Shaw and Leslie May were ambushed. A seven-page handwritten journal entitled "Nunez Killings" and "Francisco Cisneros Death" dated January 27, 1977, author unknown, was given to Raul R.

Cisneros (son of Raul Eugenio Cisneros) of Raymondville, in 2007, by a Raymondville resident who had kept copies of these pages. The author states, "I reared a girl that was six months old when her father was killed. Her father was Jose Nunez."¹⁶ This little girl, Josefa Núñez López, is now (in 2009) 82 years-old and still living in Raymondville. In 2005, Josefa retained little recollection of her mother and her older siblings. They were separated after the death of her father. Josefa was uncertain of when she had lived with her mother. She thought that an aunt and uncle had gone to Mexico for her and brought her back to Raymondville.¹⁷ Further research continued on this event, and Rosalva Cisneros Gonzales of Harlingen provided a phone number of someone whom she thought could identify the unknown author, because the author mentions other relatives' names. Fela Urbina Martínez of Raymondville, a daughter of Jose Urbina says that her father wasn't fluent in English but got by, and he definitely didn't write in English. All of the pages are written in English and some are in long hand while others are printed. Fela says that Josefa was raised by her parents, and she corroborates the names of relatives in the article and her father's occupation as someone who laid concrete.¹⁸ The author (presumably José Urbina, born in 1905) states that he was at a dance where two Anglos were killed. He further states that he didn't want to get close to the bushes where the victims were seen as they were still moving, but one was jumping around because he had been shot in the head. He goes on to say that several men were arrested that same night. He further explains that those arrested and never proven guilty for the murder of the two officers were "two brothers, one cousin, and a Polish man." Also arrested was eighteen-year-old Francisco Cisneros, the eldest child of Manuel María and Hilaria; who, allegedly, was implicated in these murders. Francisco Cisneros was jailed with the Núñez family members and the Polish man, who was determined to be Austrian (southern Poland having been part of Austria until the end of World War I).¹⁹

Kyle Coleman, a Bexar County Deputy dedicated to searching

and researching data of fallen officers, posted the following information on a Willacy County Message Board of Ancestry.com: "According to newspaper accounts, on the night of the killings, Sheriff Teller and his deputies rounded up 20-24 persons (mostly Mexicans) who were in and around the area and placed them in jail for questioning."²⁰

In the nineteenth-century, many Anglos intermarried with prominent Spanish families, learned Spanish, and joined the Catholic Church. A surge of Anglo settlement followed the building of the St. Louis Brownsville and Mexico Railway in the lower Rio Grande Valley in 1904. W.A. Harding, Samuel Lamar Gill, Uriah Lott, and Adam Davidson became land promoters encouraging Anglos to move to the area, and many pastures were converted to plowed fields. They designed flyers and brochures, and they mailed letters to northerners enticing them to visit the Valley to motivate them to purchase land in Willacy County.²¹ Their literature portrayed a happy and easy life, full of opportunities.

The descendants of Oscar Cisneros, the son of Manuel María and Hilaria Cisneros, kept a letter, dated 14 August 1926, with the letter head "Harding-Gill Co," which included a map. This map is a rough sketch of the lower Rio Grande Valley. It includes the names Edinburg, Mission, Pharr, San Juan, Alamo, Donna, Weslaco, Mercedes, La Feria, Brownsville, San Benito, Harlingen, Point Isabel, Lyford, LaSara, Hargil and Raymondville. It promotes an extensive farming section, ranging from \$300 to \$3,000 per acre, with the words "citrus orchards under irrigation." Lasara and Hargil include a rectangular box with squares inside indicating that the section contains 50,000 acres and has the railroad symbol stretched across it. The map has a sunshine symbol on one corner with the words "A Day of Opportunity." The Gulf of Mexico is in close proximity and shows a ship and the words "World of Commerce." In 1926, a concrete highway existed between Harlingen and San Benito. The map indicates that hunting, bathing, fishing and sailing are available along the Laguna Madre Inland waterway. Additionally, the map shows a St. Louis,

Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad stretching from the top of the map all the way to Brownsville and across to Point Isabel.²²

The construction of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad facilitated the opportunity for Anglo newcomers. The newcomers, however, were not like their predecessors. They had no intention of learning the Spanish language, adapting to the customs, or integrating with the families. Labor and race relations became strained, and new Anglo county officials forbade Mexicans to hold dances, keeping them under surveillance, and also passed laws making Willacy County dry. The county also established laws regulating the travels of Mexicans; these laws were primarily aimed at the Mexican laborers, who were now required to have signed passes to enter or exit the county.²³

Francisco Cisneros' occupation as an eighteen-year-old in 1926 is unknown, but he obviously did not work as a deputy. Francisco liked law and order, in accordance with his mother's teachings. Pictures of Francisco show the teenager to appear much older than his age. He wore a black hat and a bow tie. He was about 5'10" and weighed about 195 lbs. When he wasn't wearing a hat, his thick dark hair was slicked straight back. One of his favorite pastimes was playing the Mexican card game *malilla* with his many friends, one of whom was Francisco "Pancho" Chamberlain.²⁴ *Malilla* is a point-trick card game for four players in fixed partnerships. At the time, it was a popular game among Francisco and his friends, and often Francisco and Pancho were fixed partners.

Coleman writes that, according to the Willacy County News, "Deputy Constable Shaw, Deputy Sheriff Mays, night watchman Mike Chrestman, Sidney Brandt, Jack Shaddick and George Roubé comprised a party of law enforcers detailed to keep peace around the Mexican dances Saturday night, two such dances being in progress at that time and lasted until after midnight." A shot was fired near one of the dances between 2 and 3 AM, and the six law enforcers split up to investigate. Brandt tells Shaw and Mays that he saw a gun pointed towards them, and, shortly thereafter,

the shooting started. Deputy Constable Shaw was shot between the eyes, and Deputy Sheriff May was shot in the heart. Both men died. Brandt received a slight wound to the stomach.

Officers theorized that the shots were fired to bait them, so that they could be ambushed in retaliation for previous arrests. Coleman reports that as many as 24 men were arrested,²⁵ but newspaper articles only indicate that the two Núñez brothers, their cousin Cinco Gonzales, and a foreigner – an Austrian – Matt Zallar, were arrested. Nonetheless, even though it was not recorded, the Cisneros family remembers that Francisco Cisneros was also arrested. Urbina states that he was pouring concrete in the basement of the courthouse. According to Urbina, those arrested included Fabián Chávez, Juan Garza, and Fidencio Garza, a lawyer. On Sunday afternoon, they were released, and the rest were “chained in their place.” Some oral stories report that they were chained and displayed on the lawn of the courthouse. Tuesday, 7 September, Tomás Núñez went to the jail to visit his sons. Núñez arrived at 11AM to bring food for his sons. It appears that Urbina was still laying concrete at the courthouse. He states that, at 12 noon, he went to eat, and that the deputies told him and others that it was unnecessary for the prisoners to get food as they were going to be killed.²⁶

The old Willacy County jail was on the top floor of the Willacy County Courthouse. Prisoners had to climb a metal spiral staircase to get to the jail. When Tomás Núñez arrived with food for his sons, he encountered them on the ground floor of the courthouse as they were being escorted from the jail. It became apparent to him that his sons were being escorted out of the building. He became alarmed and got upset. He pled that his sons not be taken anywhere. To provide protection for his sons, he threatened that he, too, would accompany them. At the bottom floor at the courthouse, lawyer A.B. Crane, Dr. C.C. Conley, and Luther Snow (who later became sheriff of Willacy County) intervened on behalf of Francisco Cisneros, and pulled him from the line. The officers didn't refute them, and freed Francisco.²⁷ Some newspa-

per stories state that, when Tomás Núñez went to visit his sons, he was allowed to talk to José Núñez and that his son confessed to the killings. He allegedly told Sheriff Teller that his son would assist in locating the weapons used to kill Mays and Shaw.

The headlines in a Special Edition of the *Willacy County News*, in big bold letters, on 7 September 1926, read: “Officers in Running Fight with Bushwhackers.” Still in big letters, but smaller print than the headline, part of the headline reads, “Five Prisoners Forcibly Taken Away from Willacy County Officers in Brush Fight Eight Miles West of Raymondville. While in Search for Weapons Used in Sunday Slayings—NONE OF THE OFFICERS WERE HURT—Report is that Seven or Eight Mexicans Were Killed and Several Wounded in running Fight Staged Near Here Tuesday Afternoon.”²⁸

Urbina appears to have partially witnessed some of the incident when the lawmen were shot, and he also appears to have been a witness when Tomás Núñez visited his sons in jail. He states: “Then some guards from the Border Patrol (border guards) came so that they could take the Nunez from the sheriff. The two men, real famous for killing Mexicans (known locally as Los Canosos—The White Headed), were in charge. They were brothers. They came here and asked the sheriff to turn the prisoners over to them. He did, and they put them in the cars. There were about 20 armed men. They took them to “Las Presitas” and killed them.” Urbina adds, “We at the time didn’t think anything about the prisoners (inferring that he did not know that they had been killed yet) until my friend, Lázaro Cantú, the one who took care of the horses of the prisoners was sent on horseback to announce to the town’s people that some bandits from Mexico had attacked them and had mistakenly shot and killed the prisoners instead of the intended target—the Anglos.” He continues, “The deputies sent him to come and tell that lie so that the town wouldn’t blame the Border Patrol or Teller for the killing. Then I went with Mike Castro who had a station wagon (Julia’s) to get the bodies. The three in one house, Crescencio Gonzales, the cousin in another

house, and the Polish in his house." Apparently the bodies were delivered to homes instead of a funeral home. The three refers to Tomás Núñez and his sons, José and Venacio Núñez. One document states that Matt Zallar was an Austrian; Urbina refers to him as Polish. Others refer to Zallar as a foreigner. Zallar (born 1897) was married to Tomasa Rodríguez (died 1983). They had a child by the name of Francisco Zallar (born 1926 and died 1979) who became a plumber in Raymondville.²⁹ The tombstones of Matt Zallar, Venancio Núñez, Tomás Núñez, and José Núñez are all within close proximity to each other at La Piedad 1 Cemetery in Raymondville.³⁰

The special edition of the *Willacy County News* reported the account quite differently. The special edition of the paper starts by stating that a running fight was staged eight miles northeast of Raymondville on Tuesday afternoon. "Accordingly the five prisoners, guarded by five officers left the court house shortly after the noon hour for the northwestern (a different direction) section of Willacy County. Upon arriving at a certain point about eight miles out of Raymondville, the prisoner, who had confessed, told the officers to stop, that the guns were hidden just a little farther into the woods that were inaccessible to the cars. The prisoners were ordered out of the cars, and the peace officers followed close on their heels. When they had gone about seventy-five or hundred yards, the officers were fired upon from ambush by about twenty or twenty-five men, as well as *The News* informant was able to tell from the number of shots that were fired." The newspaper reports that no officer was wounded, and that in addition to the five prisoners other Mexicans were killed and wounded.³¹ Urbina accompanied Mike Castro in Julia's station wagon, which brought back the bodies of only five prisoners, and no more bodies were found. Also, the dance and the murder of Shaw and May occurred on the east side of town close to 10th Street. The alleged suspects were arrested shortly after the murders, but when they were escorted to look for the weapons, they were taken to a northwestern section of town.

The cumulative factors of Allen Nichols and Leonard Swanson, two Anglos forced into peonage, and the murders of five prisoners under his care brought the demise of Sheriff Teller. The peonage case was tried in federal court in Nueces County in January 1927. Later the same year, both Teller and Frank Brandt were tried as accessories to the murders of the five prisoners. The sheriff argued that the charges were politically motivated and that the murder charges were instigated by his enemies. He accused “the independents” of attempting to discredit him. He argued that if he hadn’t filed charges against the loafing Mexicans and had let them stay in jail at the state’s expense that he would have been better off. He was doing his lawful duty to protect and serve.⁵² Even though the sheriff had many loyal supporters in the county, he and several others were found guilty of peonage. During the Núñez trial, several witnesses were harassed, and a prosecuting attorney who helped with the case was beaten.⁵³ Urbina and others reported that, when Sheriff Teller came out of prison, he was greeted by supporters and given a new car. He says that Teller left town shortly thereafter.⁵⁴

Dr. C.C. Conley was highly regarded by all the Cisneros family. The family was forever grateful to him, and gave him the credit for pulling Francisco from the lineup – thus saving Francisco from the ambush. With the old sheriff gone and a new one in place, Francisco (through the influence of his mother and perhaps of his father’s only full brother Uncle Francisco Javier Cisneros, who had been a Willacy County Constable from 1908 until 1915) joined law enforcement and became a deputy constable. His old *malilla* partner, Pancho Chamberlain, however, went a different direction and became a bootlegger.⁵⁵

On 1 July 1926, two articles ran side by side in the local paper, requesting that interested persons be notified regarding the estate of Francisco Cisneros (now 19 years of age), Manuel Cisneros (18), Raul (16), Israel Cisneros (11), Oscar (13), Leonor (11), Rafael Cisneros, Carmen, Eutiquio Perez (whose age is illegible), and Ricardo Perez (2). The article further states that Hilaria Perez

has filed for Letters of Guardianship upon the estate of said minors with a court hearing to follow on 1 November 1926. The adjoining article is a public citation posted also by the Willacy County District Clerk, the State of Texas, and Willacy County to Manuel M. Cisneros and unknown owners and all persons owning or having or claiming any interest in Lot 10, Block 9, Town of Raymondville is delinquent for taxes, \$0.34 for State Taxes and \$0.31 for County Taxes. Shortly thereafter, Hilaria purchased an ad in the paper that read: "FOR SALE—Five mules. For particulars see me at the Perez store on West Hidalgo Avenue. Mrs. H.C. Perez." On 23 September 1926, another newspaper story reads that a Harlingen man purchased four lots from the owner, Señora Hilaria Perez. Ernest Crowell drew up the contract for the sale of the lots to J.J. Willingham of Harlingen. The four lots on West Hidalgo Avenue were considered prime property and in line with future business development in Raymondville.³⁶ The single mother with ten children couldn't maintain the store open; she closed the store. Hilaria kept possession of four downtown lots, the store building, and their residence. Ralph wrote that his mother, a proud woman, was forced to take in washing and ironing. The same year, Manuel María, the second eldest son, married Benita Garza of La Reforma in Starr County. The rest of the Cisneros family members, even the young children who were able to do so, obtained jobs.³⁷

In 1929, Raul Eugenio, the third child, went to work for Mr. E.W. Bauer as the manager for his grocery store. Raul, in love letters, dated 1933, to his future bride, Consuelo Rios, in General Terán, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, referred to Mr. Bauer's store as La Bodega. Israel, called Quelel, also worked for Mr. Bauer at the store and was also his chauffeur. Quelel told his brother Ralph that Mrs. Bauer would admonish him and, as a backseat driver, often reminded him, "Drive carefully, kid." They worked from 7AM to 7PM Monday through Friday and on Saturdays from 7AM to 9PM. Raul earned \$9.00 while Quelel earned \$7.00 weekly. Oscar convinced his mother to verbally change his birth date

when he was only sixteen years old, enrolled in the Navy, and left Raymondville.

Ralph wrote in detail about the many jobs that he had while a youngster. One of his jobs was sweeping Brumley's, and he earned \$1.50 weekly. After Oscar joined the Navy, Ralph took Oscar's job at the post office, sweeping it twice a day for \$10.00 a month. Cisneros family stories passed down the claim that Hilaria became ill, and, knowing that she would die, made arrangements for her 15-year-old daughter to marry the Methodist pastor, Daniel G. de la Garza, who was 30 years her senior. The prearranged wedding was Hilaria's plan that her younger children, Carmen (12), Eutiquio (6), and Ricardo (4) would be taken care of by her older daughter, Leonor, and her husband.

Ralph writes, "I remember being in church on Sunday evening, July 25, 1931, and my maiden aunt, on my mother's side, Rita Calvillo, running into church very excited where services were being held for the evening, and breaking the news to my mother that Francisco had been shot and killed near La Piedad Cemetery on 10th Street. Ralph never mentioned that his mother was ill, had tuberculosis, or knew that she was dying, but the story only makes sense, considering that she prearranged the marriage of her 15-year-old daughter to someone thirty years her senior. Ralph goes on to say that his mother and her eldest son had an uncanny relationship. He describes his mother "as religious, a small, frail woman, strong of character and of the finest moral fiber. She was a strict disciplinarian and a strong builder of character. She was kind and understanding and understood her children, their individual needs and how to best prescribe for them. She would not tolerate any violations of her rules, unless it was her eldest son, Francisco." He took note of the special bond that the two shared. He describes that Francisco could arrive at any time, and that his mother enjoyed long chats with him. Ralph thought that it might be distasteful that his brother would come in and say, "How are you, Hilaria?" He describes his mother's reaction to Francisco's statement as one that made him realize that their relationship was

indeed special. Needless to say, Hilaria was devastated to learn that Francisco was killed.³⁸ Eight months later, Dr. C.C. Conley recorded on Hilaria's death certificate, March 1932, the cause of death was "tuberculosis," and another contributing factor was "worry."³⁹

Again, the headlines in the *Willacy County News* reads, "Two Officers Killed, Third Wounded, OFFICERS HUNT FOR SLAYER OF CONSTABLE HAYGOOD AND CISNEROS—Guzman, County Jailer, Narrowly Escapes Death From Assailants Gun." A manhunt ensued; Governor Ross Sterling offers a \$250 reward for the arrest of Pancho Chamberlain wanted in connection with the murders of Constable W. S. Haygood and his deputy, Francisco Cisneros. The murder scene of Shaw and May, in 1926, was within two hundred yards of the murder of Haygood and Cisneros. The officers were riding in an open car owned by Cisneros when they noticed a small car and slowed down to investigate. Jose Guzman stated that the officers slowed down to question a man and a woman sitting in a parked car near the Mexican "baile" or dance. The man and woman quickly exited the car and approached the officers. The man opened fire on Cisneros shooting him a total of three times, once in the wrist, one wound entered his left side, and the third penetrated his heart. Haygood was shot from the back, and the bullet penetrated his heart. Guzman crouched down in the back and received a bullet in his mouth. The assailants fled abandoning the car, and the female companion was later identified as Dominga Bueno from Edinburg. Before going to the hospital, Guzman rushed to town to get help. Guzman and the female companion identified the killer as Pancho Chamberlain, an individual who had been a defendant in several liquor cases.⁴⁰

The speculation is that Chamberlain was upset with Cisneros for embarrassing him on several of the previous charges, and he was fed up with Cisneros. Others speculate that Chamberlain was acting in retaliation for the murders of Shaw and May. Pancho Chamberlain was never captured. It was rumored that some helped him escape to Mexico. It was also reported that he became

a lawman in Mexico and that he killed several people in Mexico and that he was eventually killed there. No one knows for sure what became of Pancho.⁴¹

Now, with all the parents and their older brother deceased, the rest of the family persevered and looked for that day of opportunity in Raymondville. Their maternal grandmother, Filomena Calvillo, worried about her grandkids; she was frail but traveled against the wishes of her other children to visit the grandkids in Raymondville. She died while visiting them at their home in Raymondville on Tuesday, 3 September 1935. Newspaper articles say that she is interred in Raymondville, but her gravesite has never been located. Filomena was born in Reynosa and came to the Valley at the age of two; she was the daughter of Luis Munguia and Viviana Garza.⁴² The remaining single brothers and sisters continued to live together and remembered the teachings of their parents and survived the rough times, and all made contributions to improve Raymondville.

When he was murdered, Francisco had a child born in 1929 – Hector Cisneros; his mother was Juanita Ganzaba. Manuel María, now the oldest, reopened the old family store on 5th Street in Raymondville⁴³ and operated it for many years until his retirement. His wife Benita owned an adjoining dress shop named Diana's. Raul Eugenio and his wife, Consuelo, opened a small grocery store on the corner of 2nd and Raymond Street in Raymondville and operated it until his retirement in 1977. Raul owned the first wrestling arena in Raymondville, the Sports Center Wrestling Arena. He founded the Cuchi Cuchi Go Go pork skin cracklings, and for many years served as a Deputy Voter Registrar which entitled him to help register people to vote through a system called "Poll Tax." He took advantage of the opportunity to register people and to educate them on how to vote as well. He maintained sample ballots and advised voters on whom to vote for. Prior to elections, he would situate a microphone on the bed of the pickup and travel the streets of Raymondville announcing and encouraging them to do their public duty and get out to vote. Politicians were aware of

his activities, and on several occasions, they would visit his neighborhood store. Raul would rally the neighborhood, and Senator Lloyd Bentsen, Representative Kika de la Garza, and other local politicians would stand on the bed of the pickup and use the large microphone to announce their platform. Raul was probably one of the original merchants in Raymondville who started to sell food to go. His grocery store, even though it was small, was busy, and had a following of loyal customers. Raul cooked several beef heads every weekend, and people arrived early because, by noon, he was sold out. Later, he built a giant outdoor brick barbeque pit and grilled chicken, steaks, ribs, and *tripas*, and even people from other sections of town came to buy the hot grilled meat. Consuelo made homemade *chorizo* and occasionally she made *menudo*. A writer by the name of Jaime A. Rodriguez wrote a letter to the editor of the *Chronicle and Willacy County News* on 23 August 2006, recalling the early days in Raymondville. One of the things that he mentioned is that "Raul Cisneros had one of the first TVs in town, and we would watch TV at his place and later Dad bought our first TV in 1948."⁴⁴

One of Raul's best friends was Francisco Grajales, a local Spanish disc jockey. Raul had a radio voice, and he sponsored a Spanish hour on KSOX in Raymondville. He ran his own radio announcements with the store's weekly specials with Herb Albert and the Tijuana Band playing "*Cinco de Mayo*" in the background. Part of his announcements told the local audience that his store was doing its share to improve the economy with the vast savings afforded to its customers. After his death in 1980, Consuelo reopened the grocery store and eventually sold the store and the old homestead (their home was totally destroyed by fire in 1972) to a female entrepreneur from Harlingen.

Israel or Quelel joined the Navy. He was stationed at Pearl Harbor and then transferred to the European Theatre where he was a member of General Patton's Army. He received several decorations. He was killed in action in Germany. A memorial located on the lawn of the Willacy County Courthouse bears his name along with

those of other heroes from Willacy County who were killed during World War I and II. Oscar Cisneros retired after a long career with the Navy. He and his wife, Tomasa Lozano Villarreal, owned a small store on Briggs Coleman Road in Harlingen. He became a lieutenant during World War II, and served at the US Embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay. Leonor divorced the Methodist pastor and remarried to George Bailey of Brownsville. They later relocated to Houston, where she raised their eleven children. Rafael or Ralph Cisneros joined the Navy also. He served as a Raymondville City Commissioner and later as mayor. He was a notary who, in his occupation, helped many people with legal documents by completing forms and with translations. He married Dolores Anzaldúa. Carmen, the youngest Cisneros child, also joined the Navy Waves and became a nurse. She married Pablo Cuellar. They made their home in Brownsville, where she worked for a doctor's office for many years helping in many capacities. Later they owned a restaurant called the Wagon Wheel, and eventually they opened a yarn shop called the Darn Yarn Shop.

Eutiquio or Quico Perez also joined the Navy. He served six years; he wore five battle stars on his Asiatic-Pacific Campaign ribbon denoting the five major naval engagements in which he participated. He was never married. He was killed in a car accident in 1948.⁴⁶ Ricardo or Richie Perez also joined the Navy; he was stationed in the South Pacific. He learned many skills while in the Navy and was quite talented. He was definitely a multitasker. He worked several jobs by getting up early and delivering mail to rural areas in Willacy County and also worked part time as city secretary in Raymondville. He worked as a store manager for his brother Manuel María. When his brother retired, Richard or Richie purchased the store and continued to operate it until he retired. He married Sofia Anzaldúa, sister to Dolores Anzaldúa.

Two different newspaper articles featured the family members. The headline reads "Willacy Family Doing Its Part In War; Six Family Members in Service Now." The article mentions each one: Ensign Oscar is now in Montevideo, Uruguay. Miss Carmen

Cisneros, HA 1-c received her "boot" training at Hunter College, New York City; she will report to her new station at San Diego, California where she will be assigned to duty in a naval hospital. Chief Petty Officer Ralph Cisneros is stationed at the Naval Base in Kingsville. Richard Perez, Signalman 2-c is somewhere in the South Pacific; Eutiquio Perez, Fireman 2-c is somewhere in the South Pacific; and Corporal Israel Cisneros is stationed at Camp Haan in Riverside, California. Another article mentions that they are members of the same family, but that their parents are dead, and it also mentions that they have three additional Cisneros cousins who are in the military. The three cousins are children of their Uncle Francisco Javier Cisneros.⁴⁶

Collectively and individually, those that survived the early days of Raymondville became productive and optimistic individuals. They left a positive influence. They took every day and looked to make it a day of opportunity and improvement for themselves and those that they touched. Individually each one had the pride that their mother displayed and worked diligently to give instead of take. They lived in harmony with all people, were honest, and respectful. It was important to never need help or to take from someone. Their dreams and goals were to make improvements or contributions and leave Raymondville a better place.

In the last statement of a newspaper article, Richard Perez is quoted as saying while he is in the Navy, "Right now I am hearing on the radio 'Got Too Much of Texas,' but I know I haven't." Raymondville was home, and the day of opportunity was there, and, if they were alive, they would tell you that it is still there in Raymondville.⁴⁷

Endnotes

1 Copy of Deed Recorded, The State of Texas, Albert Nichols, County Clerk Hidalgo County filed at 6 o'clock PM July 15th A.D. 1895. Copy in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.

- 2 Copy of Letter in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 3 Ayarzagotia Contreras, Sara, **Genealogy research done by Sara, March 14, 2005.**
- 4 Copy of Letter in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 5 Copy of Deed Recorded, The State of Texas, Albert Nichols, County Clerk Hidalgo County filed at 4 o'clock PM March 1st, 1897.
- 6 Copies of Letters in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 7 Catholic Archives of Texas, Abstract of Sacramental Record, Record of Marriage, August 12, 1878.
- 8 <http://pilot.familysearch.org>, Claudio Leal.
- 9 Catholic Archives of Texas, Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Brownsville, TX, January 24, 1881, entry # 52 for Manuel Marfa Cisneros and #53 for Concepcion Cantu.
- 10 Cisneros, Ralph, *Rio Grande Round-up*, page 236.
- 11 See "Raymondville, Texas, *The Handbook of Texas Online*.
- 12 Copies of tax records documents in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 13 Cisneros, Ralph, *Rio Grande Round-up*, page 235.
- 14 See Raymondville Peonage Cases, *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Garza, Alicia A.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Copies of these documents were given to Raul R. Cisneros of Raymondville from another Raymondville resident. Copies of these documents are in the family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel as of 2006. From interviews with Fela Urbina Martinez on March 4-5, 2005, it was determined that the author of the notes was her father, Jose Nunez.
- 17 Interview with Josefa Nunez Martinez at her home in Raymondville, October, 2005.
- 18 Telephone Interview with Fela Urbina Martinez, March 4-5, 2009.
- 19 Copies of documents in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 20 Ancestry.com by Coleman, N. Kyle, Willacy Co, Texas Deputy Sheriff Louis "Slim" May, killed in the line of duty, Posted Oct. 6, 2007, 5:11 PM.
- 21 See Willacy County, *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Garza, Alicia A.
- 22 Copy of letter and map in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 23 See Willacy County, *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Garza, Alicia A.
- 24 Cisneros, Ralph, copy of unedited draft submitted to *Rio Grande Round-up*, in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 25 Ancestry.com by Coleman, N. Kyle, Willacy Co, Texas Deputy Sheriff Louis "Slim" May, killed in the line of duty, Posted Oct. 6, 2007, 5:11 PM.

- 26 Documents in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 27 Cisneros, Ralph, copy of unedited draft submitted to *Rio Grande Round-up*, in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 28 *Willacy County News*, Vol. 9, No. 36, Raymondville, TX Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1926, "Officers in Running Fight with Bushwackers. Page 1.
- 29 Muniz, Delia Zallar, Telephone Interview, March 6, 2009, by Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 30 Documents in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 31 *Willacy County News*, Vol. 9, No. 36, Raymondville, TX Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1926, "Officers in Running Fight with Bushwackers, page 1.
- 32 See Raymondville Peonage Cases, *The Handbook of Texas Online*, Garza, Alicia A
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Documents in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Cisneros, Ralph, copy of unedited draft submitted to *Rio Grande Round-up*, in family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 State of Texas Certification of Vital Record, County of Willacy.
- 40 *Willacy County News*, Vol. 9, No. 36, Raymondville, TX Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1926, "Officers in Running Fight with Bushwackers. Page 1.
- 41 Family files of Ruby Cisneros Casteel.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 *Chronicle and Willacy County News*, Raymondville, Texas, Wednesday August 23, 2006, pg. 3, Rodriguez, Jaime.
- 45 Family files.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY



Historia de la Aduana de Matamoros

por

V.A. Javier Huerta Castañeda

Los orígenes de la aduana, como institución, se remontan a la existencia de los primeros núcleos de gentes. Las aduanas nacen a la vida pública con anterioridad a los gobiernos. Probablemente el nombre fuere diferente e incluso que el establecimiento no fuera permanente.

Las primeras referencias documentales de tributación se remontan a seis mil años en el territorio de Mesopotamia, en la actual Irak, donde se encontraron unas tablillas de arcilla, que según los antropólogos e historiadores, aluden a la aplicación de impuestos para gastos de guerra.

Los egipcios, 2,000 años antes de cristo, instauraron un sistema tributario de impuestos directos e indirectos. La agricultura era gravada de acuerdo con base al nivel que alcanzara el río Nilo, el cual dejaba una capa de limo que fertilizaba el terreno.

En Grecia, muy pocos datos se tienen de épocas anteriores a la homérica. En esa época, los impuestos sobre el comercio se reducía al intercambio con los países vecinos, muy especialmente esclavos y vino, a cambio de armas, pieles y granos. Aristóteles dejó constancia al decir que los ingresos ordinarios de los estados griegos se limitaban a los procedentes del patrimonio privado del estado y de los impuestos del consumo y aduaneros.

En el antiguo testamento, se relata como los hijos de Jacob iban a Egipto a comprar granos, llevando consigo donativos, los cuales no eran el precio de lo que se iba a comprar sino verdadero tributo de aduanas pagados en especie que les daba el derecho de ejercer el comercio en el país.

Roma conoció de Grecia el cobro por el tránsito de mercancías. La tentación de someter a tributo el comercio con el extranjero es demasiado natural para no pensar que cualquier pueblo se sienta inclinado a utilizarlo como un medio fácil y cómodo de procurar ingresos al erario. La mención de “portuorium” la da Tito Livio el año 580 A.C. ya que el senado, para asegurarse el apoyo de la plebe, concedió al pueblo la exención del pago de los “portoria”.

Para ésta época, las ciudades griegas ya recaudaban derechos de aduana en los puertos y en los límites de su territorio. Es probable que, siguiendo el ejemplo, Roma haya percibido derecho de aduana cuando el comercio exterior fue suficiente e importante para hacerlo lucrativo. El “portuorium” se afirma era un impuesto sobre la circulación de las mercancías, pero el vocablo tenía un sentido más amplio ya que comprendía tres tributos: los impuestos de aduanas, los arbitrios, y el peaje. El impuesto no sólo se pagaba en las fronteras del estado, sino en diversas circunscripciones aduaneras en que estaba dividido el imperio romano. Nada parece indicar que la institución de portuorium no haya prevalecido en España como provincia romana y que se mantuviera viva con mejor o peor fortuna, pero, durante la dominación árabe, se instituyó el impuesto de almojarifazgo y que duró hasta la Reconquista. A la conquista de Sevilla por el rey Fernando III, tuvo buen cuidado de conservar el cuaderno donde se contenían las tarifas de los impuestos de entrada y salida de las mercancías. La palabra “almojarifazgo” es de origen árabe, derivada de “almojarife” y ésta del verbo “xerefe,” cuyo significado es ver o descubrir con cuidado una cosa. Los reyes de España, al correr el tiempo, introdujeron modificaciones derivadas de sus necesidades financieras, y así este impuesto saltó el Atlántico durante la conquista española y se estableció en la Nueva España.

Época Prehispánica

En América, en la época prehispánica, ya había una gran actividad comercial entre los pueblos de mesoamérica que tenían además del trueque, sistemas de valor y medidas que se usaban para el inter-

cambio de mercancías. Los tianguis o plazas de mercado estaban sujetos a estricto reglamento, cuyo cumplimiento era vigilado por personal especial. Las culturas dominantes exigían a los pueblos sojuzgados el pago de tributos e imponían una organización de comercio a grandes distancias, organización que resultó vital para la sociedad precortesiana.

El historiador Fray Diego Durán (1537-1588) escribió: “Los señores recibían derechos de las transacciones que se realizaban, ésto proveniente de que lo vendido se pagaba un impuesto para el Señor y para la comunidad, estos derechos se pagaban en la misma especie con la que se comercializaba.”

Época Colonial

El comercio de España con sus colonias comenzó con la expedición de las reales cédulas de 1509, 1514, 1531 y 1535, por las que se legitima el monopolio mercantil con los territorios recientemente conquistados. En la Nueva España, se instalan las casas de contratación, creadas desde 1503 para controlar y fiscalizar el comercio y la navegación entre España y las Indias. En Veracruz, el año de 1551, se inicia la edificación de las primeras instalaciones portuarias. El impuesto debía cobrarse en el puerto de Veracruz, habiéndose comisionado a Alonzo de Estrada, Rodrigo Albornoz, y Gonzalo Salazar para que residieran alternativamente en aquel puerto a fin de recaudar este derecho.

El comercio con el oriente se inicia en la segunda mitad del siglo XVI en la ruta comercial Acapulco Manila. Ya para 1593, el rey Felipe II expide una cédula real para restringir el volumen de carga y limitar las mercancías no filipinas. Dado que en el puerto de Manila no había ningún control de revisión aduanal, éste se realizaba en Acapulco.

En el virreinato de la Nueva España, se establece el derecho del impuesto a la importación, que fue de tal magnitud que la corona dictó sobre la materia numerosas cédulas reales, decretos, y ordenanzas para regular la entrada y salida de mercancías, incluso

ya se habla de franquicias diplomáticas para la introducción de mercancías, desde 1532 hasta 1817.

En el puerto de Acapulco el tráfico comercial se llevaba a cabo mediante esporádicas ordenanzas y cédulas reales. Para 1702, se elabora el primer reglamento para regular el tráfico commercial entre Filipinas y la Nueva España. Existen datos del establecimiento de la real aduana de Acapulco hacia 1776.

Para el año de 1729, el virrey Casafuerte expidió una cédula para que ninguna mercancía que llegara al puerto de Veracruz se bajara a tierra sin consentimiento del oficial de justicia o regidor. La pena por el incumplimiento era el decomiso de la mercancía.

El Nuevo Santander

En el año de 1749, José de Escandón colonizaba el norte del Nuevo Santander con las villas de Camargo y Reynosa, continuando después hacia el oeste, y dejando a un lado el paraje de los Esteros Hermosos, a pesar de que tenían abundante agua y agostaderos excelentes. Al darse cuenta de esto, el señor Matías de los Santos Coy instaló en ese lugar su rancho y le puso por nombre San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos ese mismo año de 1749. Pero, poco tiempo después, se dió cuenta de la inseguridad por las correrías de los indios bárbaros, y emigró hacia otro sitio menos peligroso.

Después de veinticinco años, el crecimiento de ganado en Camargo y Reynosa hizo que los vecinos pensaran en la vasta y fértil tierra de este paraje y resueltos a enfrentar a los indios bárbaros, se mudaron a él en 1774.

Los terrenos, aunque estaban despoblados, no carecían de dueño ya que el rey Carlos III en el reparto de tierras le había otorgado a Don Antonio de Urizar 648 sitios de ganado mayor, dentro de los que se encontraban los de los recién llegados.

Cuando iniciaron las gestiones para adquirir dichas tierras, ya había fallecido el señor Urizar, dejando como albacea a su hermano, Andrés Vicente. Los colonos nombraron al capitán Ignacio

Anastasio de Ayala como su representante para tramitar la compra de estos terrenos con el señor Ignacio del Valle, que era el apoderado de Andrés Vicente, de modo que, el 18 de octubre de 1784, se entregaron las escrituras de 113 sitios de ganado mayor localizados al sur del Río Bravo, desde la desembocadura hasta la colindancia con los fundos de Reynosa.

La división de los terrenos se efectuó el primero de diciembre de 1784. Tocó a Don Ignacio Anastasio de Ayala diez y medio sitios ubicados en lo que había sido el rancho de San Juan de los Esteros Hermosos. En fecha no determinada, y con el permiso del dueño, los demás colonos levantaron en él sus viviendas para poder prestarse eficaz auxilio contra los salvajes. Así ese asentamiento se convirtió en el lugar donde habitaron los colonos, sus familias, su servidumbre y los indios arrimados.

En 1797 a 1799, el capitán Ignacio Anastasio de Ayala fue nombrado por el gobernador del Nuevo Santander como justicia mayor.

Hacia el año de 1820, el Padre Ballí realizó un censo de población, encontrándose 1,489 blancos, 22 mestizos, 52 indios y 746 castas.

El 9 de Noviembre de 1820, por órdenes reales de la corona española, se habilita para el comercio exterior el puerto del Refugio, en la desembocadura del Río Bravo, cuando ya se extinguía el regimen colonial. El alcalde, Don Juan José de Chapa, cumple la orden habiéndose abierto el puerto del Refugio en 1824.

Al consumarse la independencia, la regencia del imperio designó el 4 de octubre de 1821 a las personas que ocuparían las diferentes cárteras o secretarías habiéndose nombrado para secretario de hacienda al señor Rafael Pérez Maldonado, de 4 de Octubre de 1821 al 30 de junio de 1822, tiempo en que estuvo la primera y segunda regencias y primeras semanas del gobierno imperial de Agustín de Iturbide. Este personaje, Pérez Maldonado, había sido agente fiscal de la real hacienda en época de la colonia, y puede considerarse como el primer ministro de hacienda que tuvo la América independiente.

Época Independiente

Probablemente la primera legislación aduanera fue el llamado "Arancel General Interino Para el Gobierno de las Aduanas Marítimas en el Comercio Libre del Imperio," de fecha 15 de diciembre de 1821. El capítulo I habla de las bases orgánicas para la formación del arancel que provisionalmente se formuló y que regiría para todos los puertos del imperio mexicano.

El capítulo II menciona los géneros cuyo evaluó o aforo quedaría a criterio de los vistas, previo reconocimiento del administrador de la aduana. El capítulo III se refiere a las mercancías de importación prohibida. El capítulo IV se refiere a los puertos habilitados en los que se admitiría sin distinción a cualquier buque con mercancías, siempre que pagaran los impuestos.

En el capítulo V se refiere a las instrucciones para el gobierno de las aduanas, estableciéndose las obligaciones de los capitanes de buque así como facultades del administrador, jefe del resguardo, contador de la aduana, y de los libros que deben llevarse. También se detallan las labores encomendadas a los vistas. Se divide a las mercancías en seis grupos y se plantean las reglas para la operación del arancel, estableciendo que los géneros, las mercancías de importación prohibida y las libres de impuestos quedaban a criterio de los administradores de las aduanas.

No obstante las enérgicas medidas adoptadas en contra de los insurgentes, la congregación del refugio sirvió de refugio a algunos de los perseguidos y se festejó en este lugar con entusiasmo el triunfo del Plan de Iguala. El emperador Agustín de Iturbide autorizó el puerto de Brazos de Santiago, hoy puerto Isabel, y en su honor la ciudad puso su nombre a una calle. En el catálogo nacional de monumentos históricos e inmuebles se consigna que, en abril de 1823, el vecindario y el Ayuntamiento de Matamoros, recurrieron a la diputación provincial para solicitar terrenos para el fomento de la población, lo cual les fue concedido el 6 de mayo del mismo año.

Siendo Presidente de México el Sr. Gral. Guadalupe Victoria, dicta, el 23 de diciembre de 1824, instrucciones a los contra resguardos para la persecución al contrabando, que fue el inicio de la estructura aduanal en México, legislado para evitar la defraudación fiscal. Por decreto de fecha 10 de mayo de 1826 fomentó la exportación, y expidió un arancel para las aduanas marítimas y fronterizas el 16 de noviembre de 1827, lo que significó un paso en la organización aduanera.

El puerto de Matamoros se convirtió, con la independencia y apertura al comercio exterior, en un centro urbano con influencia en la zona nordeste de México. Para los años 1830 ya se destacaba Matamoros por dos cosas importantes, el crecimiento del comercio legal y el contrabando, que se facilitaba ya que en el paraje llamado Brazo de Santiago se hallaba a 50 kilómetros de Matamoros y se accedía a la ciudad por malos caminos, encontrándose despoblada y "rodeados de lagunas y también cubierto de densos chaparrales". También la boca del Río Bravo hacía sencilla la introducción ilegal de mercancías, principalmente el tabaco, que estaba prohibida la importación hasta 1856. El servicio consular británico informó que el contrabando por Matamoros hacia 1830 era ligeramente superior al volúmen del comercio legal que se realizaba por ese lugar.

En el archivo histórico de la Secretaria de Hacienda y C. P., se encuentran los documentos más antiguos de la aduana de Matamoros, en el legajo 168-1 libro de cargo general de 1828-1829, en el legajo 168-2 el libro de data general de 1828-1829, en el legajo 168-3 el libro de copias de manifiestos presentados en 1828, en el legajo 117-1 las lista de productos de julio de 1834 a junio de 1835, y en el legajo 225-4 el libro de pólizas de 1837-1838.

En 1831, se firmó el tratado de amistad con los Estados Unidos, uno de los primeros convenios firmados por nuestro país en materia de comercio internacional. Posteriormente, en el Brazos de Santiago, el gobierno "creó un resguardo, construyó un buen local

con piezas suficientes para una aduana”, ratificándose su apertura en 1837.

En el arancel de 1842, aparece Matamoros como aduana marítima de primera, su jurisdicción llegaba por el litoral del Golfo de México hasta Brazo de Santiago por el norte y por el sur hasta la Boca del Río y Boca Chica. En 1849, era contador de la aduana de Matamoros Miguel Payno. En 1856, era administrador de esta aduana el Sr. Constantino Tarnava que había sido teniente coronel de ingenieros. Constantino Tarnava, Manuel de Mier y Terán, y Luis Berlandier formaron parte importante de la comisión de límites de 1826.

En 1831, José María Villarreal es, por segunda ocasión, alcalde de Matamoros, y, en ese año, llegó la imprenta a la ciudad. Desde 1836, se inicia el conflicto con los colonos tejanos, percatado de la incontrolable penetración de vecinos del país del norte, no sólo en Texas sino en Nuevo Méjico, Arizona, y la alta California. Por este motivo, expide el decreto de 17 de Febrero de 1837 relativo a los puertos para el comercio extranjero y de cabotaje y de clasificación de las mercancías marítimas y fronterizas, quedando abiertas al comercio extranjero, entre otros puertos, Matamoros. En este decreto, se hacía ver al país del norte hasta que partes del territorio de América ejercíamos soberanía, siendo este documento el último esfuerzo legal para rescatar un extenso territorio que se nos iba de las manos y que finalmente por el tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo perdimos. En ese decreto de 1837, las aduanas marítimas y fronterizas se dividieron en cinco clases, siendo las de Matamoros, Veracruz, y Santa Ana de Tamaulipas primera.

En Matamoros en 1842, los impuestos recaudados por concepto de importaciones y exportaciones fueron de \$214,812.22, y, en el año de 1843, fueron de \$319,508.89. La noche del 4 al 5 de Septiembre de 1844, Matamoros sufrió el embate de un ciclón, dejando muy dañada la aduana que se encontraba en la calle del comercio. La sección aduanera del puerto del Refugio quedó prác-

ticamente destruida falleciendo el encargado junto con su familia y tres celadores, así como el patrón de falúa con sus marineros.

En el arancel de 1845 aparece como puerto Matamoros, aún cuando se establece que este arancel se aplicara cuando vuelva a la obediencia del supremo gobierno, estaba dividido en trece secciones. La ferretería tosca pagaba tres pesos el quintal, peso bruto, por ejemplo: alambre, agujas, cadenas de hierro, hachas y hachuelas, etc. También pagaban 6 pesos el quintal las agarraderas, argollas, alcayatas, bisagras, botones, etc. También pagaban 6 pesos el quintal los abalorios, la barba de ballena, el betún y el charol para botas, los cepillos, etc. Pagaban 15 pesos el quintal las mercancías como agujas, anillos, aretes, armas blancas, acordeones, cajas de música, canastas, cinturones, etc. El artículo 21 de este arancel establecía que los carros y carruajes, nuevos o usados, diligencias, cabrioles, carretas, carretelas, pagaban la pieza de 25 a 200 pesos, y los muebles a 15 pesos el quintal. El artículo 91 correspondía al despacho de las mercancías y dice que para efectuar este despacho concurrirán el administrador de la aduana o el contador o un empleado comisionado por aquel, el vista que se designe, podrá asistir el comandante de celadores o el segundo, y todos examinarán si las mercancías están de conformidad con el pedimento presentado por los consignatarios. Lo que no esté caerá en pena de decomiso.

En el año de 1846, la aduana de Matamoros se cerró para todo comercio por instrucciones del gobierno, debido a los lamentables tratados en los que México perdió gran parte de su territorio y que obligaron al gobierno abrir nuevas aduanas al aparecer la línea divisoria que delimitaría el decreto de 20 de noviembre de 1848. El secretario de hacienda, Don Manuel Pina y Cuevas, expidió el decreto de fecha 20 noviembre de 1848, en el cual divide la frontera norte en tres secciones (oriente, chihuahua y occidente) y señala los lugares de vigilancia, designando al personal que formaría de manera provisional los resguardos. De esta forma surge la aduana de Matamoros como marítima y fronteriza, teniendo puntos de vigilancia en Reynosa y Mier y una receptoría (garita de recaudación) en Camargo.

El Gobernador Pedro de Ampudia, deseoso de poblar el noreste, autoriza la creación de depósitos libres constituidos con artículos extranjeros exentos de impuestos, lo que determina una corriente migratoria de mexicanos que buscan allende el Bravo una mejor vida. También obliga al gobierno federal a dictar medidas fiscales a favor de los pobladores de las villas fronterizas de Tamaulipas como fueron las fráncicas aduanales del 4 de abril de 1849, que permitirá por un plazo de tres años la importación de harina común de 8 arrobas \$1.00, harina flour barril de 8 arrobas \$1.50, arroz, quintal (46 Kg.) \$0.75, azúcar, quintal \$1.00, tocino salado quintal \$1.20, manteca quintal \$1.20 y toda clase de menestretes por aforo 20%.

Pedro de Apudia lo hace extensivo a su estado, Nuevo León, por decreto de 18 de Octubre de 1853, ordenando que se harían las importaciones precisamente con documentos expedidos por la aduana de Matamoros, y en caso contrario serían decomisados. La invasión de víveres extranjeros produjo la protesta de los fabricantes de azúcar del Estado de México, y ,por petición de ellos, cesa la importación de azúcar por Matamoros y aduanas de la frontera del Estado de Tamaulipas.

El secretario de hacienda, Francisco Olarriaga, el 24 de noviembre de 1849, señaló un plazo de treinta días para que el gobierno organizará y reglamentará el servicio de los resguardos terrestres. En cumplimiento a esta orden, el 20 de julio de 1850, el Secretario de Hacienda, Manuel Payno, expide el reglamento para el contrarresguardo de Nuevo León y Tamaulipas. Posteriormente, siendo Secretario de Hacienda Don Manuel Dublán, el 21 de marzo de 1885, expide el decreto creando el cuerpo denominado gendarmería fiscal, que más tarde se convirtió en el resguardo aduanal mexicano, que estuvo en funciones hasta 1991, cuando fue sustituido por la Policía Fiscal Federal.

El Plan de la Loba es redactado y firmado el 3 de septiembre de 1851 por José María Canales y un grupo de vecinos, en los 12 artículos de prohibiciones y de derechos de importación. El fra-

caso de la rebelión que desvirtuaron la esencia del plan, la violencia, el pillaje, y la destrucción de Matamoros, y la manera como la población se convierte en Guardia Nacional, dio a su resistencia el carácter de lucha patriótica. Se ordenó la baja de los impuestos aduanales con el objeto de disminuir la popularidad del movimiento, quitando su fuerza económica y acabando la revolución, atrayendo hacia la causa nacional las simpatías de pueblo y el comercio.

La legislación comercial, y en particular los aranceles, era uno de los mecanismos que se valía el centro del país para controlar los vínculos económicos con el exterior. Así, en 1849, el gobierno federal produjo los derechos de importación para el consumo de las poblaciones fronterizas tamaulipecas, y les autorizó la libre importación de comestibles básicos y semillas de todas clases por el término de 3 años. Fueron estas medidas puestas en vigor nuevamente en 1853. Posteriormente, la ordenanza de 1856 permitió la libre importación de los comestibles de primera necesidad cuando fueran para el consumo de las poblaciones fronterizas del norte del país. En los Estados Unidos, eran exento de impuestos a las importaciones si su destino final era México. Esta autorización se concedía a los comerciantes para pasar las mercancías hacia México por cualquier lugar de la línea divisoria, lo que les permitía eludir la vigilancia del contratesguardo y facilitaba las operaciones fraudulentas.

Entre 1852 y 1858, floreció el contrabando. Los comerciantes importaban mercancías europeas a Brownsville, Texas, y de ahí a Matamoros, para el consumo local u de otra ciudad fronteriza o para enviarla ilegalmente al resto del país o reexpórtala de contrabando hacia Texas.

En el mes de octubre de 1851, José María de Jesús Carvajal entró a Matamoros y proclamó un arancel que permitía la entrada libre de impuestos para abarrotes y artículos de primera necesidad. Imponía derechos moderados al resto de las importaciones, lo que le valió el apoyo de comerciantes de ambos lados de la frontera

y obligó al general Ávalos, comandante federal, a proclamar un arancel que reducía muchos derechos de importación.

En abril de 1852, el gobierno federal abolió el Arancel Ávalos, y, ese mismo año, el Secretario de Hacienda, Marcos de Esparza, propuso la demarcación de una zona libre de comercio a lo largo de la frontera norte. Este proyecto no fue aprobado, pero, en enero de 1853, el Presidente, Juan B. Caballos, dispuso que en las aduanas fronterizas y marítimas se levantarán las prohibiciones y disminuirían los derechos de importación y dio permiso para introducir vivera "en tanto se expide un nuevo arancel".

Antonio López de Santa Ana hizo otras concesiones a la frontera, como fue la exención de impuestos a los buques extranjeros que llegaran a la boca del Río Bravo y del derecho a lo que consumiera en la franja fronteriza entre Matamoros y Nuevo Laredo.

El 27 de mayo de 1852, se publicó el decreto por el que se modifica la organización del ministerio de hacienda, quedando dividido en seis secciones, siendo una de ellas la de crédito público; antecedente que motivó que, en 1853, se le denominara por primera vez secretaria de hacienda y crédito publico.

Las bases generales para el arreglo de la Hacienda Pública del 11 de enero de 1854 elevaron al rango de dirección general a la sección de aduanas, comprendiendo tanto a las marítimas como a las interiores. En 1855, se restaura nuevamente el Arancel Ávalos, pero fue sustituido poco tiempo después por otro arancel menos liberal. En agosto de ese mismo año, el Gral. Santiago Vidarra decreta una serie de rebajas al arancel de 1853, que, después, se conoció como el arancel Vidaurri, y que rigió en las aduanas de Tamaulipas por algunos períodos entre agosto de 1857 hasta agosto de 1858. Este arancel funcionó con descuentos adicionales que variaron entre 15 y 60 por ciento.

En agosto 26 de 1855, por disposición del comandante general de Tamaulipas y gobernador de Nuevo León, Gral. Santiago Vidaurri,

se establece la aduana de Nuevo Laredo, siendo su primer administrador el Sr. Antonio Tamez.

El Sr. Matías Romero y el Sr. Gral. Don José Matías de Jesús Carvajal escribieron que, de 1857 a 1858, el gobernador del estado de Tamaulipas expidió un decreto autorizando a comerciantes y ciudadanos de esa porción de tierra para introducir mercancías libres de toda clase de derechos. El decreto del gobernador fue puesto en operación con tres años de anticipación a la ratificación del gobierno federal y estuvo en vigor hasta 1870, a pesar de las protestas hechas por las ciudades de Veracruz y Tampico de ser parcial e injusto, pero el gobierno federal no se encontraba en condiciones de rehusar cualquier demanda. La mercancía introducida bajo este decreto sólo pagaba los derechos cuando se exportaba de la zona libre al interior de México, y causó un efecto desastroso al comercio de la ciudad de Brownsville y otras poblaciones de esa parte del Río Grande.

El 31 de enero de 1856, se expide la ordenanza general de aduanas en la que se establece como puerto y aduana fronteriza para el comercio extranjero el de Matamoros. La tarifa para pago de tres impuestos constaba de 524 productos. Los pasajeros podían traer libres de impuestos hasta diez libras de tabaco, dos botellas de vino o licor, dos relojes de bolsa con sus cadenas y sellos, un par de pistolas, una espada, un rifle o escopeta o carabina, y un par de instrumentos de música, excepto pianos u órganos, así como su equipaje y joyas que fueran de uso particular. Se considera contrabando la introducción clandestina de mercancías y la circulación de moneda falsa de cualquier cuño.

En 1856, meses después de que Tamaulipas reasumió su soberanía a raíz del golpe de estado del Presidente sustituto de la República, Lic. Ignacio Comonfort, expide la ley para deuda pública y la administración de las aduanas marítimas y fronterizas, creando una junta de crédito público que tendrá a su cargo crear el arancel y demás leyes vigentes.

El gobernador Ramón Guerra, en un alarde de soberanía estatal, el 17 de marzo de 1858, creó una zona de libre comercio a lo largo de la frontera con Texas, y estableció que las importaciones para el consumo de la zona, para el comercio de la zona, y las importaciones que se depositaran en almacenes, mientras no se internaran hacia el sur estarían libres de impuestos federales. El gobierno de Don Benito Juárez sancionó dicho decreto con fecha 30 de julio de 1861. Esta libertad de comercio trajo gran prosperidad en la frontera, surgiendo el puerto de Bagdad, que pronto adquirió la categoría de municipio libre, desapareciendo posteriormente con los huracanes de 1867.

Al principio de la guerra en los Estados Unidos, el comercio seguía llegando al puerto tejano de Brazo de Santiago pero poco después se transfirió al otro lado del Río Bravo, fundándose Bagdad en 1863, que en dos años llegó a tener más habitantes que los que tenía Tampico. Hay constancias de que “la playa frente al pueblo estaba cubierta de pacas de algodón que salían y mercancías que entraban. Las tiendas eran numerosas y estaban repletas de mercancías.”

El general Vidaurri, “deseando aumentar la concurrencia de barcos a Matamoros,” el 5 de abril de 1862, estableció que el algodón que se importara para ser reexportado pagara un derecho único de un peso por quintal. Pocos meses después ordenó que el algodón que se importara para consumo interno pagara 50 centavos más.

También controló el comercio del noreste hasta el invierno de 1863-1864, cuando se negoció el libre tránsito del comercio por las aduanas y del Río Bravo el uso del puerto Bagdad para el comercio confederado permitido, y para depositar en Monterrey mercancías en tránsito de hacia Texas.

Siendo gobernador Vidaurri, en 1861 fue declarado gobernador Jesús de la Serna, estallando un conflicto entre sus partidarios (llamados los rojos) y los de Cipriano Guerrero y José María de Jesús Carvajal (llamados los Crinolinos), interrumpiendo las comunicaciones entre Matamoros y Monterrey. El gobierno federal

nombró a Santiago Vidaurri comandante militar de Tamaulipas, enviándolo a la frontera para solucionar el conflicto. Vidaurri, como primer paso, cerró la frontera. Posteriormente al reabrir la, dispuso que, en lugar de entrar la mercancía a la zona libre de impuestos del arancel, las importaciones pagarían la mitad de los derechos al momento de cruzar la frontera y, al internarse al sur de la zona libre, pagarían el otro 50 por ciento. Gravó al algodón texano con impuesto de dos centavos por libra, que fue reducido a la mitad después de que los Tejanos dejaron de ayudar a Carvajal.

En septiembre 15 de 1861, el Presidente de la República, Lic. Benito Juárez, firma el decreto por el cual la planta de empleados de la aduana marítima de Matamoros contaba de: 1 administrador con el sueldo anual de \$4,000.00, oficial primero contador \$2,500.00, oficial segundo \$2,200.00, oficial tercero \$1,400.00, oficial cuarto \$1,100.00, oficial quinto \$1,000.00, tres escribientes a \$700.00 cada uno, un vista \$1,800.00, portero, contador de moneda \$400.00, primer comandante de celadores \$2,000.00, segundo comandante 1,500.00, y veinticinco celadores a \$1,000.00 cada uno.

En el diario oficial de julio 6 de 1870, nueve años después, se publica el presupuesto para la aduana de Matamoros, en la que se observa que los sueldos no han variado, aumentándose las plazas de vistas y creando las de patronos de falúa (2) con un sueldo de \$400.00 cada uno y tres bogas a 4350.00 cada uno.

Siendo el Presidente de la República el Sr. Manuel Gonzalez (matamorenses), expide el decreto de fecha 18 de enero de 1881 sobre los sueldos de los empleados de la aduana de Matamoros. Se observa que los sueldos no han variado en lo general, pero las plazas aumentaron con un contador de \$3,000.00 un oficial 6° con \$900.00, un oficial 7° con \$800.00 13 ayudantes de garita con un sueldo de \$180.00 cada uno y dos veladores más con \$600.00 cada uno. El 15 de enero de 1882, dispone el Gral. Manuel Gonzalez, Presidente de la República, que todo individuo que fuere nombrado para un empleo de aduanas marítima o fronteriza se le daría

un mes de demora para llegar a su destino, si el agraciado se excediera de este término, cuando no sea por enfermedad comprobada, se entendería que renuncia a su empleo.

En diciembre de 1863, el gobernador de Coahuila y Nuevo León ordenó que la mercancía que se internara por Matamoros para reexportarla por la aduana de Piedras Negras pagará el 125 por ciento sobre los derechos de tránsito y que se pagarían en el primer punto al llegar a Monterrey. El gobierno federal abolió este impuesto en mayo de 1864, apenas derrotado Vidaurri.

Durante la rebelión de Vidaurri, se importaron por Matamoros aproximadamente 12,000 pacas de algodón con un valor de 2,400,000 pesos. Juárez pensó en confiscarlas, pero los comerciantes le propusieron pagar los impuestos, y así obtuvo cerca de 96,000 dólares para el gobierno republicano. La memoria de hacienda de 1870 dice que los recursos que el gobierno nacional pudo disponer durante el año fiscal 1863-1864 "fueron muy limitados, a consecuencia de que el gobierno estuvo privado del producto de casi todas las aduanas de la República, y de los rendimientos de una gran parte del territorio por estar ocupado por el ejército francés. La única aduana marítima que se conservó en posesión del gobierno nacional durante este año fue la de Matamoros, cuyos productos (insignificantes en otras ocasiones) fueron, en este año, de alguna cuantía por el movimiento que hubo en ella, por la guerra civil de los Estados Unidos, y el bloqueo y ocupación de la ribera izquierda del Río Bravo.

Teñidas o crudas se deberá declarar el número de hilos que se tengan en un cuarto de pulgada para su correcta clasificación y pago de los impuestos correspondientes. En septiembre de 1870, se tiende la línea telegráfica de Monterrey a Matamoros. En 1872, el arancel simplifica los trámites en las aduanas, y hay la intención de iniciar el desmantelamiento de las alcabalas y combatir el contrabando. El día 18 de agosto de 1876, se ordena que todo puerto de la República que se encuentre ocupado por fuerzas o autoridades desidentes quedará cerrado al tráfico mercantil. En

1880, siendo presidente de la República el Sr. Gral. Porfirio Díaz, expide el decreto que cambia la tarifa del impuesto de importación que constaba ya que 894 fracciones y en la que se pagaba por kilo o docena, por ejemplo: zapatos para demás 10 pesos la docena, cigarros 1.25 el kilo, cerveza 0.20 el kilo. En este arancel ya se introduce la figura del agente aduanal.

Siglo XX

En julio de 1905, se suprimió por decreto la zona libre que de hecho ya no existía, pues los derechos aduanales advalorem habían sido aumentados del 2% al 18.5%. La ruina económica de Matamoros era notable, ya que, para cuando se levantó el censo de población en 1910, la población contaba solamente con 7,390 habitantes en la ciudad y 8,649 en el campo, o sea 16,039 habitantes en todo el municipio, que entonces comprendía todo lo que hoy es Valle Hermoso y parte de Río Bravo.

El 15 de mayo de 1856, se había concedido el permiso para construir el ferrocarril de Matamoros a Monterrey, el cual fue inaugurado en el año de 1905, aunque desde 1885, siendo Presidente de la República el Sr. General Porfirio Díaz, ordena la construcción de los tendidos ferroviarios que enlazarían el centro del país con el norte y los principales puertos del golfo. Puso también, en ese año de 1885, una ordenanza aduanal para tratar de lograr fortalecer las finanzas del país y someterlas a la transformación que generaba el comercio exterior, reduciendo a la lista de artículos libre de pago de impuestos a la importación, sustituyendo también el sistema de cobros de aforo por la unidad del peso de las mercancías y creando un sistema de asimilación para la correcta clasificación de las mercancías que no se encontraban en la tarifa – lo que representó la culminación de lo que en materia de fiscalización aduanera se logró durante ese tiempo, y a la que en lo sucesivo se le añadirían cambios a través de circulares, leyes, y otras disposiciones.

El 19 de febrero de 1900, se crea la dirección general de aduanas y para 1906 se precisa la categoría de las 34 aduanas existentes: 3 marítimas y fronterizas entre ellas la de Matamoros, Tamaulipas,

siendo las otras Chetumal Q.R. y Soconusco en Chiapas, 18 marítimas, 12 fronterizas y una aduana interior, la de la Ciudad de México. La vida económica y mercantil giraba en torno de la aduana fronteriza.

El 16 de junio de 1910, es inaugurado el puente internacional ferrocarril, conocido como Puente Viejo, y desde esa fecha se empezó a utilizar para las importaciones por ferrocarril y para conducir también los vehículos cargados por la calle Emilio Carranza, siguiendo por la Calle Quinta hasta llegar a la aduana que se encontraba en las Calle 5ª y Morelos, bajo vigilancia del resguardo aduanal.

Según datos del Sr. Cosío Villegas, en los años 1906 a 1907, se recaudaron por derechos de importación en todas las aduanas del país \$52,320,280.99. Para 1911-1912, tiempo de la revolución, se generaron en la aduanas, por ese mismo concepto, la cantidad de \$42,203,226.00. Para el año 2004, la aduana de Matamoros recaudó aproximadamente \$5,123,700,000.00. En la memoria de la secretaría de hacienda del trienio 1911-1913, pone a la aduana de Matamoros como marítima y fronteriza y como límites “desde boquillas hasta la mitad del camino entre Reynosa y Camargo”.

Al tomar el General Lucio Blanco la Plaza de Matamoros en 1913, designó como administrador de la aduana a Don Alfredo Pérez, pero como era un mal administrador, Don Venustiano Carranza, en 1914, lo sustituyó. Nombró como administrador a Don Jesús Carranza Garza, hermano del Presidente, quien puso orden en la aduana, nombró celadores independientes del ejército. Posteriormente Don Venustiano Carranza nombró a Don Mauro Uribe, padre o pariente del héroe de Veracruz Virgilio Uribe. Matamoros era importante por los recursos que aportaba al gobierno por la exportación de ganado. La Secretaría de Hacienda estaba a cargo de Don Luis Cabrera. Era oficial mayor el Ing. Octavio Dubois y subsecretario Don Rafael Nieto, y después gobernador de San Luis Potosí. También era subdirector de ad-

uanas S. Salvat (de origen Catalán) y el personal de la aduana de Matamoros en 1914 eran los siguientes:

Administrador de 5^a. Clase – Mauro Uribe, contador de 5^a – Francisco Cantu Longoria, Oficial 5^o con funciones de cajero – Francisco Cantú Longoria, oficial de 5^a. Gumersindo Medina, oficial de 6^a – Lázaro de la Garza, oficiales de 7^a recaudadores en Garita Santa Cruz y puente internacional – Manuel Elizondo y Virgilio Cantu, escribiente de 2^a – Francisco Garza, escribiente de 2^a – Manuel Sánchez Mendoza, vistas de 3^a – Manuel Tejada y Santiago Garcia, mozo – Vicente Munguía. También existían: un comandante de 5^a, un cabo montado de 3^d., 11 celadores montados de 2^a, 15 celadores de a pie, 15 y 2 celadoras sección de Bagdad vacantes.

En 1912, nuestro país exportaba productos minerales y naturales. Los minerales eran oro y plata en pasta y acunados, cobre y plomo. Los productos naturales eran café, caucho, henequén, garbanzo, raíz de zacatón y pieles sin curtir (diario oficial 21 de mayo de 1912). El valor total de las exportaciones de las aduanas eran de \$21, 064,154.20, aproximadamente pues varias aduanas no enviaban sus informes a tiempo. Era secretario de hacienda Don Ernesto Madero y director de aduanas Adrian F. del Paso quién desempeñó ese cargo en el régimen huertista.

Para 1916, con el propósito de reorganizar su operación y funcionamiento así como procurar fluidez de ingresos al erario federal, la aduana de Matamoros, estaba considerada de quinta clase junto a las de bahía Magdalena, Mexicali, y Santa Rosalía.

En 1918, el Presidente Carranza expide un orden para realizar y hacer más eficiente la tramitación de las exportaciones e importaciones, creando una ley que dió categoría jurídica y legal a los agentes aduanales que contemplaba el arancel de 1870.

El 24 de noviembre de 1917, mediante un acuerdo, el Presidente de la República aumenta los derechos de importación municipal para la de Matamoros de 1.5% al 2.5%. En 1920, el personal de

a aduana marítima y fronteriza de Matamoros era el siguiente: un administrador y un contador de 5ª clase, ocho oficiales 7ª clase, seis escribientes de 6ª y 7ª clase, dos vistas de 3ª y 4ª clase, un alcalde de 4ª clase, un comandante de 4ª clase, dos cabos montados, un cabo de a pie, 36 celadores montados, 22 celadores a pie, tres celadoras, dos bogas y un mozo.

En el año de 1923, la aduana de Matamoros dejó de ser marítima, quedando solamente como fronteriza. Ese mismo año, se restablece la gendarmería fiscal. El 26 de agosto de 1927, en el artículo 196 de la ordenanza general de aduanas, se fija la demarcación de vigilancia de la gendarmería, que para la frontera se delimitó a una línea paralela de 20 kilómetros. El 22 de abril de 1925, se reorganiza la comisión de aranceles con el fin de hacer más eficientes sus labores en pro del desarrollo industrial y comercial del país.

En 1928, se construyó en el poblado de Santa Cruz el puente internacional llamado nuevo que también servía para el paso de mercancías y ser despachadas en la aduana. Se encontraba ubicada en la calle 5a y Morelos en el centro de la ciudad, llevándose los camiones con la carga bajo vigilancia del resguardo aduanal por la calle Álvaro Obregón hasta llegar a la calle Quinta y llegar hasta a aduana.

Mediante oficio núm. 4119-V-12772 de fecha marzo 25 de 1938, girado por el Sr. Ciro García, administrador de la aduana de Matamoros, Tamaulipas, contesta a la dirección general de aduanas, en la que propone la jurisdicción de la aduana de Matamoros, desde la desembocadura del Río Bravo hasta el punto denominado San Rafael de las Peladas, por la línea fronteriza y hasta 50 kilómetros al sur del litoral del golfo, siguiendo una línea paralela a la frontera norte hasta la altura del citado puerto.

Siendo administrador de la aduana el Señor Pedro Coronado, la recuperación económica de la región se basaba en el cultivo del algodón. La aduana recibió la orden de la Secretaría de Hacienda de suspender la exportación de este producto. Este orden significaba una pérdida de 25 millones de pesos para la naciente Asociación

Algodonera Mexicana, informando la Secretaría de Economía que únicamente se permitiría exportar lo que hubiera quedado de la cosecha después de surtir el comercio nacional, por lo que los algodoneiros tendrían que dejar 60,000 pacas de algodón. El producto total de la región consistía de 136,000 pacas. La Secretaría de Economía autorizaría posteriormente la exportación de 21,000 pacas más.

En 1947, se implementa una nueva tarifa del impuesto general de importación que sustituyó a la vigente de 1929. En esta tarifa, se concretan los mecanismos regulatorios para graduar las compras en el exterior, favoreciendo la producción nacional, empleándose también los precios oficiales. También en ese año, se expide una nueva tarifa del impuesto general de exportación en la que se suprimió el aforo de las mercancías de exportación.

En 1930, se expide una ley aduanera que ya considera las infracciones y combate al contrabando. En 1935, se expide una nueva ley aduanal el código aduanero de fecha 5 de diciembre de 1950 que sustituyó a la ley aduanera de 1935. Se integran ya de manera más funcional las normas de esta rama, creándose un servicio aduanero con muchas carencias pero ya representativo, tanto nacional como internacional, surgiendo los primeros funcionarios aduaneros capacitados en la escuela oficial de aduanas mexicana, como también en cursos impartidos en Brasil y España. En 1978, se expide la ley de valoración aduanera.

En 1962, se inaugura la nueva aduana con sus instalaciones especiales. Dos básculas pauta pesar tráileres una báscula en el almacén, y un andén para productos peligrosos estaba localizada en las calles 14 y Galeana. Esta aduana recibía la carga que venía procedente de los Estados Unidos por los puentes internacionales Viejo y Nuevo. Por el Puente Viejo llegaba la carga que era resguardada por elementos del resguardo aduanal por la calle Emilio Carranza hasta la calle Galeana y por esta calle hasta los patios de la aduana y por el Puente Nuevo por la avenida Álvaro Obregón

hasta la calle Emilio Carranza, luego por la calle Galeana, y de ahí hasta llegar a la aduana.

Posteriormente, la carga llegaba al Puente Viejo y de ahí a través de un corredor fiscal construido a orillas del Río Bravo, que desembocaba directamente en los patios de la aduana por el Puente Nuevo. Una vez cruzada la línea divisoria, tomaba el corredor fiscal a orillas del Río Bravo que entroncaba con el corredor del puente viejo hasta llegar igualmente a los patios de la aduana.

En el año de 1965, el C.P. Alfredo López Zúñiga instala la primera maquiladora, después de haber efectuado las gestiones necesarias ante la Secretaría de Economía. Esta maquiladora se dedicó a procesar crustáceos, por lo que se le llamo "Camaronera".

Con la publicación de la ley orgánica de la administración pública federal, de diciembre 29 de 1976, se publica el nuevo reglamento interior de la Secretaría de Hacienda. En el diario oficial de mayo 23 de 1977, queda integradas a la secretaria de hacienda, entre otras, la subsecretaria de inspección fiscal y la dirección general de aduanas; también la vigilancia de fondos y valores; el registro federal de vehículos y bienes muebles, así como las delegaciones regionales de inspección fiscal y registro federal de vehículos que posteriormente desaparecerían.

Una nueva ley aduanera entró en vigor desde el 1° de julio de 1982, que sustituyó al código aduanero de 1951 con el objeto de adecuar el sistema fiscal del país a la dinámica de la economía mundial. Hizo suyos los postulados del consejo de cooperación aduanera. Adoptó entre otros, los regímenes aduaneros y el concepto de valor en aduanas de la mercancías a importar, que tiene como antecedente la ley de valoración aduanera de las mercancías de importación puesta en vigor en 1978. Esta ley previó las técnicas y figuras más avanzadas como son: el depósito industrial, la importación temporal de mercancías para retornar en el mismo estado, el reconocimiento de mercancías a domicilio y las pequeñas importaciones.

En 1979, las grandes potencias económicas planean la liberalización de los mercados mundiales en lo que se llamó Ronda de Tokio, en donde se aprueba, entre varios convenios, el acuerdo general sobre aranceles y comercio (Dic. 27 de 1978).

En 1982, conforme al GATT, el gobierno dio un fuerte viraje en la política proteccionista y comenzó a integrarse en el bloque económico entrando en la globalización, bajando las barreras arancelarias para finalmente, en 1986, formalizar su ingreso al GATT.

Antes de 1990, toda la mercancía era depositada en las bodegas de la aduana y era recibida por un interventor y un almacenista, y resguardada por un cuerpo para policiaco llamado recuerdo aduanal. Los agentes aduanales debían presentar los pedimentos y sus anexos (facturas permisos, etc.). Una vez revisados y numerados, los pedimentos eran turnados a una mesa llamada de vistas, en donde el jefe designaba a uno de los vistas para que constatará que lo declarado en ese documento y sus anexos concordaba con la mercancía y que le correspondía la fracción declarada. Cuando se firmaba de conforme se pasaba a la mesa de ajustes en donde se verificaban las operaciones aritméticas, para posteriormente pagar el pedimento en la caja de la aduana pudiendo retirar la mercancía.

Al principio de la década de los noventa desaparece el cuerpo de interventores, el cajero, y el reguardo aduanal, que es cambiado por la policía fiscal. También se instaló el sistema aleatorio que previó el pago de las contribuciones, anticipadamente al ingreso de la mercancía a territorio nacional en diversos bancos. Al presentarse la mercancía junto con la documentación en lo que se llama semáforo fiscal, establecía si dicha mercancía debía ser revisada (luz roja) o no (luz verde). Posteriormente, pasaba dicha mercancía y documentación a otro módulo, en donde volvía a ser sometida al semáforo fiscal para determinar si era objeto de un segundo reconocimiento.

En la actualidad, el sistema se volvió selectivo, automatizado, y está programado con factores de riesgo para determinadas mercancías. También en el mismo módulo, se determina si va a ser reconocido por personal de la aduana o va a ser reconocida en el segundo reconocimiento por personal de una empresa privada concesionada.

En 1992, se construye el puente Los Indios — tratado de libre comercio para hacer un corredor industrial entre Canadá, Estados Unidos, y México. Está construido a 32 kilómetros de Matamoros, y cuenta con cuatro carriles para el tránsito vehicular. Conecta directamente con las instalaciones de la aduana. Cuenta con el equipo necesario para el despacho de las mercancías, incluyendo rayos gama.

El 15 de diciembre de 1995, se publica una nueva ley aduanera que entraría en vigor hasta el 1° de abril de 1996. Los cambios sustanciales fueron los mecanismos que permiten la valoración de las mercancías de acuerdo con lo establecido en el acuerdo general sobre aranceles aduaneros y comercio (GATT) y cambios en el sistema aleatorio por un sistema automatizado llamado inteligente.

Siglo XXI

En los años 2000, se instrumenta el sistema automatizado aduanero integral (SAAI). Se instaló en la aduana equipo de alta tecnología y la red de informática se actualiza de forma permanente, y puede utilizarse en el ámbito nacional con los reportes automatizados. También se instalaron equipos de control como son las cámaras de video, rayos 'x' para detectar si los vehículos vacíos no traen oculto alguna clase de mercancías, y rayos gama que tienen la particularidad de enseniar la densidad de las mercancías que se importan. Si esta densidad no es uniforme se procede a la verificación visual de las mismas.

El mecanismo de selección aleatoria, por medio del cual ya no se verificaban todas las mercancías, sino sólo las que en el momento de ser presentadas al módulo de selección aleatoria, salieran rojo,

empezó en 1989. Este era un sistema de control mediante el cual se selecciona para su revisión aproximadamente un 10% de las operaciones que se presentan ante las aduanas, desaduanando el restante 90% sin revisión alguna.

La tarifa del impuesto general de exportación que entró en vigor el 1° de enero de 1975 ya estructurada con base en la NAB, nomenclatura de Bruselas, tenía 2,940 fracciones de las cuales 571 se encontraban gravadas, 2,302 desgravadas y prohibidas. Ésta era la tarifa conocida como CUCI (clasificación uniforme de comercio internacional) establecida en 1950. Posteriormente México aceptó a finales de 1964 la estructura de la nomenclatura de Bruselas (NAB) para la tarifa del impuesto general de importación, comprometiéndose con ALCALC (la asociación latinoamericana de libre comercio) que había aceptado este sistema (NABALALC) de dar tratamiento arancelario preferencial a la importación de productos de los países miembros.

En la actualidad, México es parte del convenio internacional del sistema armonizado de designación y codificación de mercancías (OMA), que engloba aproximadamente 18.000 fracciones. La aduana de Matamoros tiene una circunscripción territorial, por decreto presidencial de 1990, que comprende los municipios de Abasolo, Cruillas, Jiménez, Matamoros, San Fernando, y Valle Hermoso – desde la desembocadura del Río Bravo hasta Nuevo Progreso.

El día 11 de enero del 2001, mediante el oficio 326-SAT-R3-A22-XIII-0295 se comunica el cierre definitivo de la aduana ubicada en las calles Galena y 14ª. Las operaciones de comercio internacional se lleven a cabo en las instalaciones edificadas en el puente Ignacio Zaragoza. Este puente, inaugurado el 30 de abril de 1999, es también conocido como Los Tomates. Tiene una circulación de 4 carriles y es el único puente utilizado para el transporte pesado ya que comunica directamente con la aduana.

En el año 2007, el personal de la aduana de Matamoros es el siguiente: un administrador, 13 subadministradores, nueve jefes de

departamento, 30 empleados nivel 6, un empleado de nivel 5, dos empleados de nivel 4, once empleados de nivel 3, ocho de nivel 2, catorce verificadores que dependen de la unidad central (México) por rotación, once personas que desempeñan labores de honorarios. La policía fiscal, que dependen del sector central (México) por rotación son: un comandante, un segundo comandante de unidad canina, ocho jefes de centro táctico, 23 inspectores y tres elementos de unidad canina.

Sin duda alguna que la economía más abierta en Latinoamérica es la de México, que ha suscrito doce tratados internacionales de libre comercio son 42 países, un acuerdo para el fortalecimiento de la asociación económica con el Japón, y, la concesión de trato arancelario preferencial A.L. ADL (Asociación Latinoamericana), que la componen trece países de la región, a la que acabe de ingresar Cuba.

T.L.C.A.N. Tratado de Libre Comercio para América del Norte con Canadá y Estados Unidos en el año 1993.

T.L.C. 3 con la República de Colombia y Venezuela, en 1995.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con Costa Rica, en 1995.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con Bolivia, en 1995.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con Nicaragua, en 1998.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con la Unión Europea en el 2000, que lo conforman Bélgica, Dinamarca, Alemania, Grecia, España, Francia, Italia, Luxemburgo, Países Bajos (Holanda), Austria, Portugal, Finlandia, Suecia, e Inglaterra.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con Israel, en 2000.

Triángulo del Norte con Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras en 2001.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con los Estados Asociados de la Unión Europea en 2001.

Tratado de Libre Comercio con Uruguay en 2004.

Acuerdo para el fortalecimiento de la Asociación Económica con el Japón en 2005.

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The Interconnected Newspapers of Matamoros, Tamaulipas, and Brownsville, Texas

by

John Hawthorne and Jessica Guzmán

The most basic building block of a community's heritage consists of its daily newspapers. Community newspapers are links to the past, present, and future. The common cultural and historical events in Brownsville and Matamoros are highlighted in both their nineteenth and twentieth century newspapers. A number of newspapers published in one city have from the start to the present reported the news in both. All Brownsville newspapers have a section dedicated to Matamoros, and all Matamoros newspapers have a section dedicated to Brownsville. "Building bridges not walls" has become a cliché of sorts in these twin cities in recent years, as national attention has focused on building a "border fence" between the two communities.

The concept of "sister cities" – towns with a unique positive and interdependent relationship – is a common phenomenon along the US/Mexico border. Matamoros and Brownsville have a long and complex relationship. It is uncommon for a citizen of Brownsville not to have close relatives in Matamoros, and vice-versa. Today, the Texas "border towns" are among the fastest growing cities of Texas, and their sister cities in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas are the fastest growing cities in that Mexican state. The population of Brownsville has increased more than 40% in the last ten years to approximately 180,000 people, making it the largest city in the four-county area known as the Rio Grande Valley. It's "sister city", Matamoros, has grown 40% in the same period of time, to more than 400,000 people.

The goal of this paper is to study the relationship between the two cities through its newspapers and to create a guide of sorts

to the newspapers through the years. The paper will also provide information as to where surviving newspapers can be found and studied. Finally, it will recommend what can be done to better preserve and make accessible the history of the cities available through their newspapers.

Obviously, we cannot in one paper do a complete and thorough history of all aspects of newspapers in the cities. It is the hope of the authors that such work will be undertaken by others. We do feel this is a worthy topic that has been severely understudied. Lieutenant William Chatfield, in his 1893 work *The Twin Cities*, covered border journalism, as did A.A. Champion in a 1970's article entitled "Papers and Personalities of Frontier Journalism 1830's to 1890's." However, much more needs to be done to document, preserve, and make better accessible this valuable resource. We will cover the newspapers of Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, from 1833 to the present. The earliest known Matamoros newspaper dates from 1833, before the founding of Brownsville. We will not study radio, TV, or internet broadcasts emanating from either city, although the cross-border, cross-cultural aspects of such a study would form an interesting and valuable paper in its own right.

Early Study of Matamoros/Brownsville Journalism

We reprint below an excerpt from *The Twin Cities*, written by Lieutenant Chatfield, about the beginnings of journalism in Matamoros and Brownsville and the impact on the community:

The *American Flag* was the first newspaper published in this section. It was begun in Matamoros and published in the interests of Messrs. Stillman, Belden, Shannon and others, who used it as an advertising medium for the town sites which they had purchased on the north bank of the Rio Grande. Lots were already on the market in 1848. In the famous chancery suit of Shannon vs. Cavazos, three copies of the *American Flag* were filed as evidence, the earliest being dated Matamoros, Mexico, June 14 1848, Vol.12, No. 208; the others were published at Brownsville, January 24 1848,

Vol. 3, No. 246. From the dates and numbers it would appear that the paper was started soon after Gen. Taylor's occupation of Matamoros, in 1846, and published semi-weekly, changing to a weekly issue in Brownsville; the "perpetual calendar" says that Wednesday was the day of publication. Simon Musina, the editor, was a brother of Jacob Musina, of New Orleans, who erected the first printing office in Brownsville.

The *Sentinel* was established in 1850, under the proprietorship of Messrs. Joseph Palmer and E. B. Scarborough. This paper was a polyglot, having English and Spanish departments. Antonio Ysnaga, who was in charge of the Spanish department, had just severed his connection with the *American Star* the official organ of Gen. Scott at the City of Mexico; upon the evacuation of the Mexican Capital, Peoples & Barnard, the proprietors, located in Corpus Christi, Texas. Mr. Ysnaga had complete files of the *American Star*; which he prized very highly, but they were destroyed by fire; the only complete files known to exist were placed in the Cotton Exposition, at New Orleans, by Peoples & Barnard.

In 1859 the *Brownsville Flag* made its appearance, and was run for two years under that title, when it was changed to the American Flag and published in Matamoros.

Henry A Maltby established the *Ranchero* in Corpus Christi, October 22, 1859, and continued to publish it weekly at that place until 1864, when he transferred it to Matamoros as a daily. After the war he came to Brownsville, where he continued to publish the *Ranchero* for several years, in partnership with Mr. Kinney. He finally sold the paper, and the new proprietors changed the name to the *Ranchero and Republican*, published daily. Another combination of this name appeared in 1876; the *Evening Ranchero*, J.S. Mansuer, editor. At a later period Mr. Maltby published a paper called the *Democrat*, which espoused the cause of a faction on the occasion of a split in the party.

The *Courier* began its career in Matamoros in 1865, but was moved to Brownsville the following year, to facilitate, it is said, the politi-

cal campaign which it proposed to direct against the autonomy of Mexico. E.P. Clandon was editor and proprietor, and a Mr. Stark, now on the editorial staff of the New York Herald, was associated with him.

Several other newspapers have been published in Brownsville at different periods and with a variety of objects. Among them were the *Rio Grande Valley*, in 1884-1885; the *Brownsville Times*, in 1885-1886; the *Republican*, the date of which cannot be accurately stated, but it was published for about two months and the *Argus*, which opened its many eyes in September, 1890, and ran through ten or twelve semi-weekly editions.

The *Cosmopolitan*, which is one of the two current English dailies, was established about twenty years ago. It has passed through many hands and has had a long array of editors. James Dougherty was the editor-in-chief for years, and so continued until 1891, when ill-health compelled him to relinquish work. His mantel has fallen upon the shoulders of his son, W.S. Dougherty, who is a fine representative of Young Texas, and wields the pen in his sanctum with as much might as he did the sword when serving in the Texas Rangers. Handsome, brave and honorable, he is destined to work a great benefit to the section to which he is firmly wedded.

There have been almost as many Spanish papers published in Brownsville as the English periodicals already enumerated. This is a necessity, owing to the fact that over one-half of the reading public prefers that language, even when they read English with ease.

El Democrata is owned by the family of the lamented Brito, who was sheriff of Cameron County during a long term of years. He was shot in the back, the assassin firing through the rear curtain of a carriage in which he was riding with his son and two of his deputies. His companions thought the report was an accidental discharge of the revolver he always wore, and drove fast towards town, to secure medical attendance; but poor Brito was dead be-

fore they could reach his house. His murder was strongly condemned, but the murderer was never discovered.

J.P. Franklin, the editor of *El Democrata*, was one of the first printers in this section, and worked on the *Sentinel* in 1850.

El Porvenir is another Spanish paper, published semi-weekly, like *El Democrata*, but devoted to interests varying sufficiently from those of its contemporary to prevent overcrowding the field of usefulness.

The *Two Republics* has come into existence recently, and is pronounced by those who are good judges, to be a praiseworthy medium of daily intelligence for its Spanish patrons.

The *Daily Herald* was founded in the summer of 1892, by Jesse O. Wheeler, formerly of the *Victoria Advocate*. Although the last in the list, the *Herald* is by no means the last in any particular journalism. The enterprising young editor came here as a stranger, but his energy and determination to succeed have already placed his paper on a firm foundation, upon which he may yet find he as "built better than he knew." The editor's wife is a lady possessing great literary talent, coupled with a journalistic style which secures him a valuable coadjutor. Her business tact enabled her to conduct the paper, during the editor's temporary illness, in such a manner as to cause laudatory comments from several exchanges.

The journalism of the border has crossed many tempestuous seas, but it is confidently predicted that the future holds bright things in store for it.

Historic Matamoros Newspapers

It is difficult to determine what, in the early nineteenth century, was a Matamoros newspaper and what a newspaper of Ciudad Victoria (the capital of the Mexican State of Tamaulipas and the other key city of the region). According to the inventory available from the Museo Casa Mata in Matamoros, the newspapers of twentieth-century Matamoros available in paper format include:

La Voz De La Frontera, 1948-1957 (39 books); *El Gráfico*, 1968-1983 (73 books); *La Opinión*, 1971-2000 (246 books); *El Manaña*, 1996-2008 (120 books); and *El Bravo*, 1969-2008 (409 books). Incomplete runs of lesser established newspapers include: *El Popular*, 1984-1993 (10 books); *El PM*, 1986-1987 (2 books); *Semanario*, 1987 (1 book); *Y Punto*, 1988-89 (2 books); *Exceluor*, 1988-89 (2 books); *El Correo*, 1989 (1 book); *El Imperial*, 1993 (1 book); *El Diario de Matamoros*, 1993-95 (3 books); *El Extra*, 1996 (1 book); *Expresión*, 2004 (1 book); *Imparcial*, 2004 (1 book); *Contacto*, 2004 and 2007 (1 book); and *Enfoque*, 2004-05 (1 book).

According to Matamoros historians Andrés and Rosaura Cuellar, *La Voz De La Frontera* and *El Bravo* are the two most important of the newspapers for researchers. However, vast numbers of *El Bravo* issues are missing due to a flooding incident described later in this article.

Nineteenth Century Matamoros Newspapers

Below is a listing of newspapers found at El Museo Casa Mata in Matamoros, with notes on key items found there. There are some copies for each year listed: *El Restaurador* (Oct 24, 1833), Ciudad Victoria; *Atalaya* (1835-36), *Ciudad Victoria* (official government newspaper); *El Mercurio* (1835-37), whose 1836 section contains copies of shipments to the port of Matamoros and information on Texas succession from Mexico, including the convention at San Felipe de Austin; *El Telescopio* (1837), Ciudad Victoria; *La Concordia* (1838-39), Ciudad Victoria; *El Ancla* (1838), Matamoros; *La Concordia* (1839); *La Gaceta del Gobierno de Tamaulipas* (1839-40 and 1842-44), Victoria; *El Desengaño: Periodico del Puerto de Santa-Ana de Tamaulipas* (1840); *El Latigo de Texas* (1844), Matamoros; *Eco del Norte de Tamaulipas* (1845), Matamoros; *La Voz* (1845), Victoria; *Eco del Norte de Tamaulipas* (1846), Matamoros; *Defensor de Tamaulipas* (1847), Tula, Victoria; *El Correo Nacional* (1848), Mexico City; *La Republica* (1849), Mexico City; *El Defensor de Tamulipas* (1850), Victoria; *El Constitucional* (1850), Victoria; *El Órgano Oficial del Supremo Gobierno de Nuevo León, Monterrey* (1850);

La Palanqueta (1850), Victoria; *El Comercio de Tampico* (1853); *El Rifle de Tamaulipas* (1856 and 1861), Ciudad Victoria; *Boletín de la Unión de Tampico* (1856-57); *La Unión* (1857), Tampico; *El Tamaulipeco* (1856), Tampico; *Boletín de Avisos* (1857), Tampico; *El Prieta* (1857 and 1860-61), Tampico; *El Seminario de Tamaulipas* (1857), Tampico; *El Noticio de ambas Fronteras* (1861), Matamoros; *La Guardia Nacional* (1863), Matamoros; *El Cosaco de Tamulipas* (1865), Güemez; *El Faro de Tamaulipas* (1866 – with a pro-Juárez sentiment), Victoria; *El Ranchero de Matamoros* (1866), in both English and Spanish; *La sombra de Méndez* (1866), Victoria; *La Unión Mexicana* (1866), Matamoros; *La Soberanía de Tamaulipas* (1866), Tampico; *Boletín Oficial de la Comandancia de la Linea del Bravo* (1867 and 1869); *La Independencia de Tamaulipas* (1867-68), Victoria; *La Reconstrucción* (1869), Victoria; *El Tamaulipeco* (1869), Matamoros; *La Bandera de Tamaulipas* (1871), Ciudad Victoria; *La Reconstrucción* (1871), Victoria; *Boletín de Campana* (1865), Victoria; *Semanario de los Debates del Congreso de Tamaulipas* (1871); and *El Progreso* (1875), Matamoros.

Texas State Library and Archives Holdings of Matamoros Newspapers

We received from *El Manaña* copies of the digital holdings of the Texas State Library and Archives related to the newspapers of Matamoros and all of Tamaulipas. They include: *El Telégrafo de Tamaulipas* (1832); *Volcán de Ciudad Victoria* (1835); *Oliva de Ciudad Victoria* (1841); *Tribuno del Pueblo de Ciudad Victoria, Mexico* (1845); *El Águila del Norte de Matamoros* (1846); *The American Flag, Matamoros* (1846); *The American Flag, Matamoros* (1847); and *Águila Mexicana, Matamoros* (1846).

Current Newspapers in Matamoros

***El Bravo* from 1952 to the present**

To begin with the study of current Matamoros newspapers, we had a face-to-face interview with *Licenciado* Oscar Treviño Guerrero, *El Bravo* reporter, at 4:00 PM, at the *El Bravo* offices in Matamoros.

The purpose of the interview was to obtain information on the history of this newspaper. Mr. Treviño, with twenty-five years of journalistic experience, initially worked several other newspapers such as *El Opinión*. He has won national, state, and local awards.

El Bravo was created by Gregorio Garza as a means to inform the population of Matamoros. It can now be accessed through the internet, and has a significant on-line presence. *El Bravo* has an on-line site at www.elbravo.com.mx. According to Mr. Treviño, before newspapers were available, information was obtained at a local meeting place called La Plaza. People would gather and talk to each other and exchange information about the latest gossip. The newspaper's archives are incomplete due to different problems through the years. *El Bravo* encountered flooding within its headquarters which destroyed most of the stored archives. Also, ex-director "Roberto" ordered the burning of archive photos, so that they currently only have photos from the year 2000 to present. Monica Robles, the Director of el Museo de Agrarismo y Revolucion for the City of Matamoros and an *El Bravo* reporter for 12 years, spoke of the great value of *El Bravo* to Matamoros. Monica remembered working on crime stories mostly in the early to mid 1990's.

A major question for Mexican journalists is personal safety. When asked about the dangers of reporting in Mexico, Mr. Treviño pointed out that reporters do not qualify for life insurance because of the high risk dangers involved in reporting, so that the company has to provide their employees with insurance. Mr. Treviño gave us a tour of the *El Bravo* newsroom and allowed us access to the printing area, editing and layout departments and much more. Arturo Zárate-Ruiz of El Colegio Frontera de la Norte (www.colef.edu.mx) is considered the top scholar of newspapers in Matamoros. He believes that journalists who are killed often die, not because of politics, but because they are delving into the wrong topics and causing trouble.

El Manaña from 1996 to the Present

El Manaña has been publishing in Matamoros since 1996, although its operations in other border cities including Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo go much further back. The editor of the newspaper, Licenciado Agustin C. Lozano Delgado, graciously received us into his office. He provided a brief history of the paper and its current goals, and provided us with digitized images of nineteenth-century newspapers from Matamoros and elsewhere in Tamaulipas. Its online website is ww.elmananadigital.com.mx.

El Expreso from 2008 to the Present

El Expreso is the newest of the three newspapers of Matamoros. It was founded in 2008 by Tomas Yarrington, governor of Tamaulipas from 1998 to 2004. *El Expreso*, in our estimation, is the top newspaper in Matamoros in on-line presence, maintaining an easily searchable index of past issues. We interviewed the city editor, Graciela Ibarra Garcia. She spoke of the troubles of starting a new newspaper and keeping the operation afloat. *El Expreso* has to resort to stronger attempts to sell its product than the more established *El Manaña* and *El Bravo*. The paper makes an effort to cover Matamoros society and also tends, from an American perspective, to offer sensationalistic, even yellow journalism. Issues include border violence and other crime coverage. Its newsroom and its printing press are located in one building. Its website can be found at www.elexpresso.com.mx. The site contains an archive of all newspapers published thus far in its history.

Past Brownsville Newspapers

The Center for American History of the University of Texas at Austin holds the following records: one reel of *124th Calvary News*, March 1941-October 1941; one reel of *4th O.T.U. Siesta*, October 27-December 29 1944; one reel of *The American Flag*, September 1847-October 1859; one reel of *El Correo del Rio Grande*, November 1866; a reel of miscellaneous Brownsville papers (*The Brownsville Sentinel*, *The Daily Cosmopolitan*, *The Daily Metropolitan*, and *The*

Daily Ranchero); another reel of miscellaneous Brownsville papers (*The Daily Herald*, *The Daily Sentinel*, *The Brownsville News*, *The Daily Republican*, *The Floater*, and *The Fort Brown Flag*); a third reel of miscellaneous Brownsville papers (*The American Flag*, *La Bandera Americana*, *La Bandera*, and *El Correo del Río Grande*); and three reels of *El Cronista del Valle*, October 1924-February 1930.

The “Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project” of the University of Houston holds the following records: *The American Flag* (1855 and 1860), C352, Brownsville; *The Daily Morning Call* (1864), C336, Matamoros; *El Chiste* (1855), C336, Matamoros; *El Justo Medio*, C336, Matamoros; *El Mundo* (1886), C017/C303, Brownsville; *El Zaragoza* (1865), C064, Brownsville; *El Puerto de Brownsville* (1955-59 and 1961), C033; *La Brisa: El Semanario del Puerto de Matamoros* (1839), C336, Matamoros; *The Ranchero* (1864), C017/C303, Brownsville; and *The Daily Cosmopolitan* (1881-85), C017/C303/C352, Brownsville.

***The Brownsville Herald* (1892 to the Present)**

The Brownsville Herald states on its masthead that it was born on the Fourth of July in 1892. It has been a major part of Brownsville life ever since. It was dominated by Anglo business interests for many years, so there is a question as to whether it can be considered a Hispanic periodical. However, many people (including the authors of this paper) believe that Brownsville was controlled by a bi-racial elite based much more on wealth and social status than ethnicity. Today the *Brownsville Herald* and its Spanish sister publication, *El Nuevo Herald*, serve a population that is almost uniformly Hispanic.

According to Chatfield’s *The Twin Cities*, *The Brownsville Herald* was not expected to be the last word in Border Journalism. Many believed that it would be supplanted by something newer. However, it is really the only print news coverage of Brownsville today.

We interviewed long-time reporter Gary Long of *The Brownsville Herald*. He informed us of the *Herald*’s long-time efforts to engage

the Spanish-speaking community in Brownsville. (No newspaper in Brownsville has survived without making some effort to reach out to Spanish-speakers.) On November 11, 1934, a wrapper was added to the Brownsville Herald in Spanish called *El Heraldó*. It was first established as a wrap-around newspaper for *The Brownsville Herald*. Money was the primary motivator, as poor Spanish-speaking families had to purchase the entire paper just to have news. The founders of *El Heraldó* were Oscar Del Castillo and Manuel Benavidez. It especially provided information about political issues concerning the *braceros*. Del Castillo worked as editor for fifty-six years, writing a column entitled "*Observando y Comentando*," which talked about political issues.

This effort was continued until 1999, when *El Nuevo Heraldó* was begun. Long believes *The Brownsville Herald* appeals to the older Hispanic community, while *El Nuevo Heraldó* targets mainly recent immigrants. It is collected by the Casa Mata archives in Matamoros, along with the Matamoros newspapers.

An interesting example of the early bi-cultural ethos of the newspapers is the character Don Pedro, who has appeared in *The Brownsville Herald* since the World War II era. Don Pedro was created originally to give weather reports during the war era, when coastal newspapers were prohibited from doing such reports due to fear of giving the Axis powers information they could use to hurt the United States. Don Pedro has a colorful history of politically incorrectness. In the past, he would be a drunken Mexican character. Today he is a cartoon character on the editorial page, doling out sage advice.

Long lamented the decline of print journalism in the Rio Grande Valley. He recalled with sadness when the printing of the *Herald* in Brownsville ended; *The Valley Morning Star* of Harlingen, *The Brownsville Herald*, and *The McAllen Monitor* are all now printed in McAllen.

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College hold the complete archives, as do other groups. The

University of North Texas Library Texas Digital Newspaper Project has begun to digitize the early years of the *Herald*. The commercial venture, www.newspaperarchive.com, has also digitized sample issues from each decade of its existence are available on-line through a paid subscription service. There are no collections of paper originals of the newspaper in its entirety.

Preservation and Access to the Newspapers

Carlos Rugerio, former Director of the Casa Mata Museum and Archives, believes that working with Americans to preserve and make accessible the newspapers of Matamoros will “educate and show people what a big difference it can make when you work together.” It is very important for the Mexican newspapers to be digitized quickly, as they are the ones in the most problematic condition. The issue of access to these digitized newspapers is an equally important issue for the Mexicans. Approximately 5,000 of the 70,000 visitors to the Casa Mata Museum at this time are from the United States. The archivists would like to see many more Americans visit and utilize their resources. The Mexicans realize that, in order for this to happen, they need to do a better job of telling the history of Matamoros. They believe that the digitization of their newspaper archives will go a long way to promote their own mission and goals for their institution.

On September 26, 2008, we interviewed Andrés Cuellar, who, for the past fourteen years, has been the Director of Matamoros’ municipal archives, located at the Casa Mata Museum. Rosaura Dávila Cuellar, Historian of Matamoros and a member of Matamoros’ Historical Society, was interviewed along with her husband. Andrés Cuellar, who has many family members living in Brownsville, does not see himself as a foreigner. The public has access to the newspapers and articles in the archives, which holds copies of *El Bravo* and *La Opinión* from 1960 to the present. The condition of these newspapers is as good as can be expected. *La Voz de la Frontera*, the oldest and most fragile newspaper, is the one

most in need of conservation. The papers were inexpensive to collect but are expensive to preserve.

Eliseo Paredes Manzano, the first city historian of Matamoros and the brother of Texas Folklorist Americo Paredes, was instrumental in starting the archives. He had an idea to conserve the papers of Tamaulipas. Passionate about history, he saw the importance of conserving the newspapers of Tamaulipas. They had ten daily newspapers in Matamoros in past times. Mr. Cuellar explained that it is not possible to conserve everything.

The newspapers in the Matamoros City Archives contain valuable information for researchers. The newspapers from the nineteenth century contain more reporting about literature and more philosophical information. *La Voz de la Frontera* was an early newspaper that consisted of four pages daily. As time changed, the number of pages increased and the newspaper came to be divided into sections (social, sports, etc.). Mr. Cuellar stated that the newspapers are most viewed by those who want to see when they were born or to remember sports news. *La Voz de la Frontera*, in contrast with modern newspapers, has few photographs.

At this point in time we are facing the distinct possibility of losing access to the information in these very old historic records if we do not take action. The most common question that visitors have when they come to the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College Archives and Special Collections is why the *Brownsville Herald* is not digitized. People come to our facility to look for information about their families and relatives and inevitably leave when they find out what a burdensome task it currently is. Scholars studying the history of the region must have hundreds of hours at their disposal in order to study microfilms. Digitization would facilitate the task of researchers and provide greater access to information for the many that have interest in the heritage of their town and community.

Saving the newspapers we still have, especially those in Matamoros, is another strong reason for our desire to digitize the border news-

papers in the first step of digitizing border related documents and artifacts. Over one million Americans have immigrated to the United States from Mexico through Matamoros since World War II. For many American families, Matamoros is for Mexicans what Ellis Island was for many immigrants of European extraction. Incredible as it may seem, Matamoros has played a significant role in the cultural and social development of the United States, but its role has not been documented very well.

At the present time, there are a few nineteenth-century Matamoros newspapers on microfilm, but very few copies of newspapers are available in any form from the late nineteenth century until World War II. As the digitization process progresses, we are confident that we will discover the existence of whatever Matamoros papers exist in the periods that the Casa Mata does not currently possess, including newspapers from the first part of the 1900s. The best way to preserve what currently exists is to produce a digital copy of the Matamoros newspapers that are presently available. Once those newspapers are digitized they can be made available to both Mexicans and Americans on both sides of the border.

There is a tremendous need for Mexican and American historians, archivists, and artists to come to work together to collect, compile, and index the materials that remain from the common past that both sides of the border share. One cannot study the philosophical and cultural complexities of the southern border of the United States without understanding the cultural and social development of northern Mexico, and vice versa. The availability of digital technology would assist us in creating a truly innovative bi-national model of collaboration between historians, museum curators, researchers, and others in both the United States and Mexico.

Because of geographical isolation, floods, hurricanes, violent border conflicts, lack of funds, and the removal of historical materials to other locations, Brownsville and Matamoros have lost a number of historical and cultural resources due to the loss of primary source material. Our hope is that we will begin to address these

problems so that the historical and cultural resources of the border may be made available throughout the world with the use of digital technology without having to remove these resources from their home on the border. An example of the need for better preservation is the lost *El Bravo* newspapers from 1951-1969 due to the flood of the El Bravo headquarters. Most of the newspaper copies that survive in the Casa Mata Museum are unique copies as well. There is a crucial need for more than one copy of Matamoros newspapers, whether through microfilming or digitization. Preserving and making accessible the cities' newspapers will give Americans and Mexicans together an opportunity to more fully understand and value one of the most unique areas of the world.

The Arnulfo Oliveira Memorial Library

The University of Texas at Brownsville

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Interviews

Interview by John Hawthorne with Arturo Zárate-Ruiz on 24 Sep. 2008.

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Interview by Jessica Guzmán with Lic. Andrés Cuellar and Rosaura Cuellar on 26 Sep. 2008.

Interview by Jessica Guzmán with Lic. Monica Robles on 26 Sep. 2008

Interview by Jessica Guzmán with Gaston Pacheco on 26 Sep. 2008.

Interview by John Hawthorne with Gary Long on 12 Oct. 2008.

The Brownsville City Cemetery

by

Eugene Fernandez

The Brownsville City Cemetery, established in 1851 and enclosed with brick walls in 1868-70, occupies Blocks 128, 129, and 130 of the Original Townsite of Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.¹ The cemetery is set on a flat, lightly wooded shelf of land that slopes down on its long northeast side to the bank of Town Resaca. The other three sides of the site—the 800 and 900 blocks of East 2nd and East 5th Streets and the 200, 300, and 400 blocks of East Madison Street—are enclosed with a whitewashed brick wall that is five feet-six inches tall. The wall extends into the right-of-way of Madison Street, reducing the width of the street to a single lane of traffic. One-story, close-set, wooden cottages of early 20th-century origin line Madison Street facing the wall. There are two street gates in the wall: the major entrance on East 5th near the corner of East Madison, and a secondary entrance in the 200 block of East Madison. Both openings are framed by pairs of brick piers outlined with corbelled bands and topped with simple pyramidal weathering. The 5th Street gate piers contain decorative arched recesses vertically centered on each pier. Stepped buttresses splay out from the back face of each pier. The Madison Street gate piers are lower than those on 5th Street and the stepped buttresses reinforcing them are not as high or long. Secondary piers occur at regular intervals to stabilize the running portions of the wall. The wall is capped by simple bands of stepped weathering. The southwest corner of the enclosure, the corner of East Madison and East 2nd, contains a subsidiary, one hundred-foot-square walled enclosure, the Cemetery of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros. Hebrew Cemetery is accessible only from a third gate facing Madison Street. It is not accessible from within City Cemetery.

A drive runs between the two street gates, making a right angle turn to parallel the interior wall of Hebrew Cemetery. Since 2003 the drive has been surfaced with tawny colored concrete paving blocks. The elite burials in City Cemetery are located along this drive, contained in imposing brick vaults and crypts. As one moves farther away from the drive in the direction of the resaca, the density of brick monuments decreases and individual headstones become more common. The cemetery feels more open and the landscape—a grass lawn dotted with stands of ebony, mesquite, and palm trees—visually dominates. Low shrubs screen, although they do not conceal, the resaca. The slope was historically the commons, where indigent burials occurred. Despite the open appearance of the landscape, unmarked burials are presumed to be dense, in part because the Mexican custom of stacked burials was adhered to.

The City Cemetery contains numerous examples of nineteenth and twentieth-century funerary architecture, sculpture, objects, and associated landscape features such as walks, curbing, and fencing. Funerary architecture reflects distinct historical episodes in Brownsville's development.² Because of its location on the Texas-Tamaulipas border, Brownsville was and continues to be strongly affected by the culture of northeastern Mexico. During the 19th century, construction practices in Brownsville were also visibly affected by New Orleans, the chief trading partner of Matamoros and Brownsville. Many of the 19th-century builders active in Matamoros and Brownsville came to the lower Río Grande from or through New Orleans. Funerary architecture in the cemetery from the 19th century displays parallels with funerary architecture in the cemeteries of Matamoros and New Orleans. Brick vaults articulated with simple molded bands and pedimented frontispieces were popular for elite family tombs. These were built of ranch-made, mesquite-fired, adobe brick. Most were finished with stucco and whitewashed. The largest of these vaults are the size of a small building and are able to accommodate multiple interments. With only a few exceptions, they do not contain accessible inte-

rior space. Lower crypt structures also contain pedimented frontispieces. This detail was a regional favorite and can be seen on crypts in the *Panteón Viejo* of Matamoros, the *Panteón Municipal* of Guerrero Viejo, Tamaulipas, and the cemetery in the small ranching settlement of La Grulla, Texas, in Starr County, upriver from Brownsville. This type of crypt is also among the oldest surviving in the Creole cemeteries of New Orleans. Other crypts are broad, solid, flat-topped structures varying in height from three to four feet.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, elite Brownsville families adopted mainstream American burial practices, erecting sculptured obelisks, crosses, or figural statuary mounted on pedestals as funerary monuments rather than Creole type vaults. These monuments were often built of granite or marble, materials not available in the delta of the Río Grande. Often, the monument was the burial place of the family patriarch and his wife. Children, grandchildren, and other household members were interred around the perimeter of the monument, their burials marked by headstones. The family plot was often outlined by a decorative wrought or cast iron fence set in brick or concrete foundation curbing with elaborately-detailed supporting posts and an entrance gate. Intense coastal humidity has exposed iron components to severe corrosion.

Within the elite sector of the cemetery, just inside the Madison Street wall and south of the drive, the density of vaults and monuments is most notable on the east near the 5th Street gate. As one moves westward along the interior drive toward the Hebrew Cemetery wall, this density decreases and the presence of open space increases.

Beyond the vaults that line the north side of the drive, lower funerary structures prevail. Curbing marks family plots. In some instances, the entire plot is surfaced with a concrete slab, although grass is the more common surface material. Crypts are interspersed with headstones and freestanding concrete crosses. Newer headstones tend to be granite and contain standardized, mechanically

inscribed religious imagery and text. Smaller plots are outlined with curbing step down the gentle slope toward the resaca bank, although the incidence of marked burials decreases and grass, occasional shrubs, and trees dominate the view. An unpaved road runs along the shoreline of Town Resaca.

The Brownsville City Cemetery retains its integrity as a 19th-century funerary landscape. Photographs by Robert Runyon, taken in the 1910s and principally illustrating new interments in the elite section, show City Cemetery as being neater and more precisely maintained than it is today.³ The absence of vegetation in Runyon's photographs is striking. Certain tree species, such as fir trees, that had been planted in the late 19th or earlier twentieth century no longer figure prominently in the landscape and the cast iron work is often in deteriorated condition. However, the presence of whitewashed Creole vaults and tombs is evident as background features, imbuing the cemetery with the structures that preserve the distinctive regional Creole-Mexican identity that took shape along the lower Río Grande in the 19th century.

Dedicated Divisions of Brownsville City Cemetery

Without having any knowledge of the social and religious patchwork that made up Brownsville society for the first one hundred years of its existence, the landscape of City Cemetery certainly yields valuable clues to illuminate these divisions. At first glance, the grounds appear to represent a homogeneous composite of statuary on its landscape. With some subtle variances, the architectural integrity and the theme of monument cover lends a uniform appearance. This cemetery, in reality, is distinctly divided into several separate sections. These dedicated sections are: General Grounds, Catholic Section, Rio Grande Lodge #81 – Masonic Temple, International Order of Odd Fellows, *Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo*, *Sociedad Benito Juarez*, *Sociedad Concordia*, Hebrew Cemetery, and Potter's Field.

These divisions are minimally apparent, other than through the presence of some masonry curbing or colonnade fencing that may

set them apart from the general grounds. Both the Catholic Section and Potter's Field stand without any structural appointment to mark their boundaries. They are geographically outlined on the master survey of the cemetery (1891). The Hebrew Cemetery, however, in compliance with conditions of their faith, is isolated by a substantial brick wall enclosure adjoined to the main City Cemetery wall.

General Grounds

Other than the dedicated sections mentioned above, all else can be considered General Grounds. Of this area, one notable characteristic exists in that the burials of the more socially elite are situated on plots or compounds of the most desirable positioning in this field. As the carriage path dissects the long rectangle of this cemetery in its length, the western half which extends over to the Madison Street border, is the highest ground, followed by the first forty feet of depth that parallels said carriage path on the east side. These runs were sought by the wealthier local residents, as is evident by the presence of larger compounds and more elaborate burial accommodations. The lower ground, extending toward the estuary bank decline, which marked the beginning of Potter's Field, is consumed by more modest funerary appointments and a higher level of singular graves.

One distinction must be made of the two sections directly on either side of the Odd Fellows/Masonic block. On the map of 1891, made by city engineers, these two sections are not divided into surveyed burial plots organized into rows. All else is neatly drafted on this master reference chart. One explanation that must be considered as to why this map is incomplete up until modern times lies in the account of the conditions of the first year of active burials in this "new" City Cemetery. This refers to what should be considered Rows 11 through 17, and then Rows 33 through 37 (all odd-numbered rows). In the year 1867, there appeared a devastating yellow fever plague in the Brownsville area, which decimated the population. Those who were not buried in mass

graves, either in the Potter's Field area, on the down-river *banco* of the military reservation, or on *ranchito* cemeteries, were buried in Rows 33 through 37. The highly irregular grave plot orientation within this sector (as well as pertains to Rows 11 through 17), stands in stark contrast to the rest of the cemetery. Tombs and individual graves in this zone are also oriented with the "tombstones facing east," contrary to the other portions of the public sector.

One can only assume that for this early period of cemetery use, a system had not been developed for the orderly placement of graves. It must have been a horrendous period indeed, during the height of this plague year. Another factor is that there are other graves bearing the dates ranging around 1858 dispersed throughout this, the earliest zone of burials. This corresponds with the great cholera epidemic of that year. These burials were most likely re-interred in the year 1867, as transfers from the "Old" City Cemetery. Mention has been made of 1867 as being the year that a mandate was given to transfer remains from the old to the new cemeteries. There is also record of the improvements having been done on the completing of a road to the new burial grounds in that year, increasing its accessibility.

In general form, this cemetery maintains its orderly, consistent Victorian lot and block grid formation throughout its grounds, with the exception of increased disorder once one approaches the demarcation of Potter's Field. Historically, this zone was the last area to be utilized in the cemetery's life, and it was not necessarily limited to pauper's burials in later years. From the 1950s up to the last years of the twentieth century, an increased demand by a growing local population, perhaps combined with the lack of an official City Sextant, surely led to this disorderly condition.

Religious Groups with dedicated burial tracts

The Catholic Church was given the largest parcel. This was specifically negotiated between the City of Brownsville and the local head of the Catholic Diocese, as the Bishop personally petitioned City Hall on November 12, 1853. On August 28, 1855, the formal

request was issued by the Church for one-quarter of the entire grounds.⁴ A condition was attached by city officials, which would require that the cost of a proportionate linear coverage of the containment wall for the cemetery would be paid by each recipient of the dedicated space. This measure of defraying wall construction costs also applied to the proportionate area allotments given to the fraternal orders.

The final grounds that were allotted for use by the Catholic Church extended from the surveyed block of Row #12 through Row #38. This was comprised of the even-numbered rows directly along the south/north carriage path, oriented on the east side of the cemetery, easterly onward to the border of Potter's Field. The easterly border follows the slight curvature in the path of the resaca waterway, leaving a concave indentation of terrain along that front.

The blocks that were purchased directly along the carriage path, early on in the development of the cemetery, extending inward for the first forty feet of these rows, were secured by the more prosperous of pioneer families. The farther one proceeds easterly down these rows toward the break in terrain that delineates the commencement of Potter's Field, the more one finds a departure from the orderliness of strict grid orientation of the burial plots. This is especially apparent in the mid-section of this Catholic compound, Rows# 28 and #30. This is further characterized by later twentieth century burials. All other burials within this sector appear to have been placed in a reasonably orderly orientation.

The Hebrew Cemetery

This area was set apart as an adjoining, completely separate enclosed compound for members of the Jewish faith. It was provided for by the city fathers in the movement to secure additional burial grounds for the young colony of Brownsville in 1851. The original negotiations for expanded cemetery needs did not make allowances for a separate parcel that would be dedicated for the local Jewish Community. All of the early communications by the members of the Board of Aldermen simply identified a "burial

ground" that was comprised of Blocks 128 and 129 of the Original Townsite laid out by George Lyons. It was at a later point that Block 130 (where the Hebrew Cemetery is for the most part located), was brought into the request from Stillman's land company. To further complicate the tracing of the property transfer, the allowance for a street (Madison Street and even Third Street) right of way appeared in the original plans and the deed transfer that was issued in 1867. An 1864 map of Brownsville commissioned by Major General Herron, who was assigned to Fort Brown, finally shows Block 130 indicated as a cemetery, yet there is no distinction as to whether there was a divided Hebrew section. A deed was issued in 1868 that reflected the property lines of both the city section and the Hebrew parcel up to Madison Street's eastern right-of-way limits. The north/south thoroughfares running parallel to Elizabeth Street allowed for a 60-foot right-of-way. The property up to that street siding was consumed by the Hebrew, and further down, the City Cemetery.⁵ These limits must have been altered when the City of Brownsville started construction on their portion of the containment wall. When this wall was laid out, the decision was obviously made, at that time, to consume the land all the way out to the centerline of the Madison Street right-of-way. There may have been some official conversation conducted on this arbitrary acquisition of this expanded land use, but nothing ever appeared in official minutes to reflect the making of this decision. Perhaps it may have been driven by the character of the rudimentary ditch that formed a border of the cemetery prior to the building of the wall. This ditch was said to have been wide and filled with thorn bushes and cactus to keep vandals out of the burial grounds. With the consumption of this extra liberty of terrain, Madison Street along the western side of the cemetery was reduced to a one-lane street, with just enough room for a single row of parked vehicles in front of the residences, without a sidewalk. This was obviously drafted in the days before the automobile was in existence.

Prior to all of this revision of extreme (westerly) boundaries, the Hebrew sector was set back approximately fifty-five feet from the centerline of the roadway. If you examine the containment wall on the Jewish side, you can observe a difference in brick courses that give evidence to the fact that the original wall was much farther inset. The original front wall allowed for a semi-circular carriage drive in front of the cemetery on the Madison Street face.⁶ It is lost to history as to exactly when a continuation wall was erected, when entry gates were installed at each front corner, and, then, when the interior wall was demolished to enlarge the Hebrew Cemetery to the west. The early maps of the cemetery show this reduced total acreage, and even a continuation of East Third Street to the resaca bank. One of the first maps that show a separate Jewish compound appeared in 1885, produced by the New York & Brownsville Improvement Company.

The Brownsville Board of Aldermen's minutes of November 2, 1867, make the first formal mention of a petition for cemetery grounds by the Hebrew Benevolent Society. The actual deed for this separate land is dated at the same time as the deed transaction for the gentile sector, on May 21, 1868. A transfer of deed was not possible earlier for either parcel, due to title litigation,⁷ which held these issues up in the courts from the time that General Zachary Taylor expropriated land to construct Fort Texas, which would later become Fort Brown, and then Brownsville. Incidentally, these "town site" provisions, such as areas dedicated for public use such as parks, churches, cemeteries, and city markets, were all surrendered as gifts to the community with the proviso that they were to remain in such use, and if not, they would revert back to the land company.

Prior to the granting of this Hebrew Cemetery, the Jewish community of Deep South Texas' only sanctioned burial compound was located 200 miles up river, at Laredo, Texas. Though this group was small in the scope of total population – perhaps a dozen members at the time of the American Civil War – this did present a severe shortcoming for them. In 1868, after the securing of

their dedicated land for burials, those of their ranks that had been buried in community (non-Jewish) cemeteries were ceremoniously disinterred for re-burial in the new Hebrew property. The only other option was to transport the remains of the deceased to Monterrey, Mexico, to the Jewish Cemetery that existed there, as many did. Beyond this Brownsville location, Jewish people of the Rio Grande Valley did not have dedicated burial space until McAllen established an appropriate cemetery in 1950. This fact stands in stark contrast to the huge impact that various members of the Jewish faith had on the social and commercial development of the Rio Grande Valley. You must consider, also, that Brownsville built the third Jewish Temple in the state of Texas, in 1870.

The Jewish faith places a requirement of having a substantial wall erected around their burial grounds as a first order priority.⁸ The construction of a wall around the City Cemetery was extended into a convoluted issue over a fifteen-year period. The Jewish community completed their wall within that first year of 1868. Evidence of this is found in City Board of Aldermen minutes requesting to “attach their wall to the existing wall of the Hebrew Cemetery.”

Fraternal Orders' Negotiations for Dedicated Burial Compounds

The issue of dedicated grounds that would be utilized for the burials of deceased members of distinct fraternal organizations was first addressed formally and officially in the Brownsville Board of Aldermen meeting of February 7, 1857. The Fraternal Order of Odd Fellows, along with the local Masonic lodge, entered into negotiations for their burial accommodations within the City Cemetery. The initial petition was to match the request that was made by the Catholic Church at one-quarter of total ground space. The total parcel that was eventually awarded, however, does not appear to be within the realm of that one-quarter land mass that was awarded the Church. It was a considerable area nonetheless. Its boundaries extend from surveyed block Row #19 through Row #31, consisting of odd-numbered rows westerly of

the carriage path and bound by the cemetery wall that runs along Madison Street.

The Masons erected a small containment “fence” within this sector, starting at Row #19 (as previously indicated) and running up to Row #25. This containment consisted of a series of concrete pickets or 3” x 3” posts, spaced approximately 8 feet apart, and having a steel ship’s anchor chain draped along the top of this support colonnade. The evidence of a trough on the top surface of these posts notes an attempt to secure this chain to its moorings. At some point in the mid-1980s, however, vandals removed this large chain, which was apparently sold on the scrap-metal black market.

Grave orientation in this sector runs contrary to the perpendicular alignment to the carriage path that prevails in the rest of the cemetery. The rows within this sector are six in number, each 6’4” in depth by 2’6” in breadth. The lateral paths separating the rows are approximately 2 feet in width. Most peculiarly, this sector and the Odd Fellows Rest are the only portions that are oriented according to the traditional religious “resurrection toward the east” practice. All else is skewed to accommodate city street alignment, or, more accurately, the original Quartermaster’s Fence at Fort Brown. Brownsville’s first (and brief, 1848-51) municipal cemetery, originally located on Block #144, was aligned in the traditional fashion of tombstones facing east.⁹

Mutualist Societies

The *Sociedad Miguel Hidalgo*, a “mutualistic” social order, has a section of the city cemetery dedicated to its membership. It is located in Row #37, just short of the end toward the Madison Street wall, in a 15’ x 15’ compound (double depth, double standard width). The iron arch that marks the entrance to this section bears the commemorative dates 1880–1969. Very little information on the local chapter of this fraternal order exists. Another similar organization was the *Sociedad Benito Juarez*, which is located in a double depth, double width plot in Row # 1, midway in this short row. The

final mutualistic group that is noted in Brownsville City Cemetery burial records is *Sociedad Concordia*. These must have been random placements because there is no evidence of a defined, dedicated area for these burials.

These mutualistic society groups were all very similar in their structure. The earliest were formed deep in Mexico around the time of the presidency of Benito Juarez. They endorsed various political ideas, but all emphasized cooperation, service, and protection for their unified memberships.¹⁰ They provided sickness and burial insurance, loans, legal aid, social and cultural activities, libraries, classes, leadership opportunities, and safe quarters for their social events. *El Gran Círculo de Obreros de México*, one of the earliest of these chartered groups, had twenty-eight branches in twelve Mexican states by 1875. Although the dictator Porfirio Díaz banned the *Círculo* in 1883, it served as a model for the *Gran Círculo de Obreros de Auxilios Mutuos of San Antonio*, which operated from the 1890s to the 1920s. Texas and Mexican *mutualistas* interacted significantly up until the time that many of them were dispersed during the Mexican Revolution (1910-20). It was then that membership in the Texas *mutualistas* swelled, surely affecting those chapters located in the Rio Grande Valley. Hence their presence is seen in Valley cemeteries.

Woodmen of the World

You can't walk anywhere in the Brownsville Cemetery without noticing the presence of these large, tree-shaped marble grave markers that bear the markings of this fraternal "order". As is the case with the *Sociedad Concordia*, there is no fixed area that these markers are located in. Quite simply, this is for the reason that the majority of these burials contain not its membership, but its policy holders. In large part, Woodmen of the World is a life insurance/burial plan provider. This group is most definitely still in existence, though they show no active presence in Brownsville. They represent themselves as the largest fraternal benefit society with open membership in the United States, with approximately 810,000

members, and 1,926 active lodges operating within this country.¹¹ Although the present-day organization of the lodge membership is similar to other well-known fraternal orders, they are not a subsidiary of any other group such as the Masonic Order, or Rotary International. This is to be said, noting the exception of the mergers that were enacted throughout the 1960s with four relatively small independent orders that had been formed in various parts of this country.

Initially founded by Joseph Cullen Root, on June 6, 1890, in Omaha, Nebraska, it served as an organized fraternal order, focused on the building and maintaining of decent social behavior, community service, and charity work. It provided a life insurance policy to its members funded by regular dues. The active lodge work, along with its membership, is no longer a requirement of all policy holders or participants in the insurance or financial services programs, and the practice of setting apart \$100.00 for a grave marker has been discontinued since the early 1920s. The modern-day character of these lodges differs little from what one might expect from a Rotary Club or local Lions Club group. The big transformation, however, exists in how the insurance division has adapted to modern times. This division has grown into a huge financial services organization, offering insurance coverage, financial planning, annuities trading, and much more. It also has developed disaster-relief partnerships with the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other charitable endeavors, teaming up with the Humane Society, Habitat for Humanity, and so on. The recent accomplishment of the incorporating of the Woodman Foundation (501c3 - Nebraska) has been a major step by this group in the development of an organized program to provide assistance in disaster relief throughout the United States in a secure, perpetually-funded manner.

Woodmen of the World Grave Marker Program

When this order was originally founded, one of the core objectives of the project was to provide a decent burial for all mem-

bers. Founder J.C. Root's motto ("No Woodmen shall rest in an unmarked grave") was not just an incidental marketing ploy. Originally, these markers were provided as an established benefit to all dues-paying members. As the cost of the statuary began to rise after the start of the twentieth century, the policy was altered to allow for the issuance of a marker with the payment of a \$100.00 rider on their policy. In the early 1920s, this marker program was discontinued, and the \$100.00 was converted to additional insurance protection.

The local representative (Captive Agent) for W.o.W. was a prominent funeral home owner, Bert Hinkley.¹² He not only collected and deposited local dues, but he also acted as coordinator of the individual family needs as were required of the local stone cutter for monument placements. It is not clear over what period of the early twentieth century the local lodge was in operation. However, the only active lodge in the Rio Grande Valley presently is registered out of Weslaco, Texas.

Founding of the Community

The Brownsville Town Company's 1848 town plan (known in Cameron County legal documents as the Original Townsite) set aside four blocks for a public park but did not designate other public reservations. After incorporation, on 24 January 1850, the city government of Brownsville compensated for this oversight by acquiring a site in the center of Block 87, in November 1850, as the Market Square, where the City Market House of 1850-1852 was built. Block 144 (East Monroe, East 11th, East Jackson, and E. 12th) was used as a cemetery by 1848, but city records indicate that, by April 1850, the Common Council was investigating the possibility of acquiring a more expansive setting for a city burial ground. The Council agreed upon an alternate site (Blocks 128, 129) on 22 February 1851, and authorized the posting of boundary markers on 8 March 1851. This new site was surveyed on 24 October 1853. The confused state of historical knowledge about conditions in the City Cemetery between 1851 and 1868 is in part

attributable to the conflicted status of property ownership claims in Brownsville. In 1849, heirs of the last private owner of the territory on which the Original Townsite is located sued the Brownsville Town Company for falsely claiming ownership of the property. In 1850, members of the Common Council (who were business rivals of Charles Stillman) asserted that, under terms of the city's incorporation, the city owned all land in the Original Townsite. In 1852, the private owners obtained confirmation of their title from the state of Texas and negotiated sale of the townsite to the Stillman interests. Stillman and Belden excluded Simon Mussina from this settlement, but Mussina sued Stillman in U.S. courts and extracted a settlement in 1864. Between May and August 1868, Charles Stillman, Sam Belden, and their lawyer William G. Hale issued deeds of ownership to the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros and to the City of Brownsville for the adjoining cemetery sites. It was only after this formal transfer of ownership that the construction of bounding walls and other improvements were undertaken. Litigation based on the contending claims of the Brownsville Town Company and the Common Council were decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1876 in favor of the Stillman interests.¹³

Brownsville's newspaper, the *Daily Ranchero*, noted the construction of the wall enclosing Hebrew Cemetery in June 1868.¹⁴ In October 1868, the newspaper commented on a plan to grade streets to make the cemetery accessible from the settled parts of the city. The newspaper observed, in October, that the wall around Hebrew Cemetery, costing \$1,100, had been completed but that the city government had not begun construction of a wall to enclose the rest of the cemetery. In April 1869, it was reported that City Alderman James G. Browne moved to appropriate \$2,500 to be paid in monthly installments for construction of the cemetery wall. Bids were solicited for the construction of the wall according to plans and specifications in July 1869, and then rejected once they were received. Reports on public expenditures indicate that Jeremiah Galvan, City Treasurer, paid Philip Savage \$1,982, in

December 1869, for building the cemetery wall and that F. E. Starck presented the city with \$92.37 contributed by ladies to defray the cost of the wall. In May 1870, A. Rodríguez, A. Quintero, and A. Glaevecke were paid for trees for the cemetery, and, in July 1870, it was reported that Louis Sauder was paid \$300 by the city for cemetery gates. Because the city of Brownsville did not have a water distribution system until 1908, plantings in the cemetery during the 19th century were not as profuse and pervasive as they are today. Drought-tolerant, thorny vegetation – characteristic examples being the Honey Mesquite tree (*Prosopis glandulosa*) and the Texas Ebony tree (*Pithecellobium flexicaule*) – did grow in the cemetery. Turf and subtropical plants are later additions.

Although the three blocks on which the cemetery was located lay in the Original Townsite, they were located near the northwest edge some distance from the core of settlement, which emanated from the southeast corner of the townsite adjacent to Fort Brown and Front Levee, just upstream from the Santa Cruz bend of the Río Grande. Not until the early twentieth century did continuous residential settlement reach and then surround the east, south, and west sides of the cemetery. Town Resaca was the north edge of the Original Townsite. Not until the 1920s was the shore across from the City Cemetery urbanized. Reports on improvements to the Hebrew and City Cemeteries in the *Brownsville Ranchero* in 1868, 1869, and 1870 imply that the cemeteries lay beyond the edge of continuous town settlement. A map of Matamoros and Brownsville, surveyed in 1890, shows continuous settlement only as far west as E. 7th St., two blocks short of City Cemetery. The 1890 map still shows the cemetery on Block 144.¹⁵

In 1915, a new cemetery, Buena Vista Burial Park, was opened at the north end of E. 7th Street and the Paredes Line Road.¹⁶ Buena Vista replaced City Cemetery as the preferred site for elite burials for families not having family plots in City Cemetery. The Corpus Christi rancher John G. Kenedy had the remains of his parents Petra Vela and Mifflin Kenedy and others buried in the Kenedy plot transferred to Buena Vista (although he left one of his half

brothers).¹⁷ City Cemetery continued to be used until the 1980s. New interments now occur only in family plots.

The Evolution of Brownsville's Cemeteries

The following is a listing, in chronological order, of the various cemeteries that served the area, from its beginning up until modern times: (1) the Old Post Cemetery (from 1846 to 1847); (2) the New Post Cemetery (1847-1867); (3) the Old Brownsville Cemetery (1848 to 1911); (4) the New Brownsville Cemetery (1851-1968/2000); (5) the National Cemetery (1867-1909); (6) the Hebrew Cemetery (1868-present); (7) the Buena Vista Burial Park (1915-present); and (8) Roselawn Memorial Gardens (1954-present).

A. The Military Reservation Cemetery

At the time of the actual establishment of the Brownsville Townsite, in 1848, the only cemetery on the north bank of the Rio Grande in this area, was essentially created and maintained within the military reservation of Fort Brown. Utilized by military and colonists jointly for the brief period until provisions were made for an exclusively civilian burial compound, it was hastily given into creation and designated "The Post Cemetery." Later references to the site were made as "The Original Cemetery" or "Old Post Cemetery". This was described as being situated directly to the southwest of the original earthen breastworks of the fort, presently the site of the municipal golf course. The very first drawings of the layout of the fort did indicate such a site. It was obviously considered in Mansfield's original plan for usage of the land.¹⁸

The first to be buried there were the casualties of the bombardment which occurred in May of 1846, in which Major Jacob Brown was mortally wounded. The site of Major Brown's grave was originally marked by a large iron cannon with its barrel pointing skyward. It must be considered also that some of the casualties of General Taylor's battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma were brought to be buried at this site, followed by the military ca-

sualties of the Battle of Cadereyta, which was the first organized engagement on Mexican soil.

It was found, almost from the onset, that this site was unsuitable for the establishment of a cemetery, due to its low elevation and tendency for frequent flooding from the all-too-near river. It is understandable that the military planners could make such an error, being that this expedition had not become familiar with the eccentric behavior of the local land and the forces of nature upon it.

B. The New Post Cemetery

In the year 1848, when Maj. William Chapman was assigned to re-design Fort Brown for more permanent and adaptive use, after the flurry of the Mexican War had been stabilized, it was decided that the precarious flooding to which the old fort location was subject when the Rio Grande River hit high water stages made the first site untenable. A new site was selected due north of the old breastworks, set back from the river by approximately 200 yards. A more substantial military complex was commissioned, and the hastily placed "Old Post Cemetery" was relocated.¹⁹ The remains of the buried military were disinterred for re-burial at the new site. Maj. Jacob Brown, a casualty of the first bombardment that truly launched the Mexican American War, and Maj. Ringgold, who was killed at Gen. Taylor's battle with Gen. Arista at the battle of Palo Alto, were among the dead brought to this new site. It is said to have had a ring of cannon, secured in the ground with muzzles pointing skyward at the center point of the officer's section of this "New Post Cemetery."²⁰

C. The National Cemetery Site

Later, an alternative site was chosen on higher ground, located on a peninsula of land that jutted into a lagoon, slightly to the west of the original location. The few "locals" that were resident in the area referred to it as the "estero". This was to become the National Cemetery on the federal reservation, on what is called the "island" of Horseshoe Lake at Fort Brown. Written accounts of 1846 de-

scribe this finger of land as "covered in timber."²¹ In 1848, this plot of 25 acres of land was grubbed and prepared for its new usage. The graves of the New Post Cemetery were exhumed and placed in the new location, in rigid military fashion, in a northeasterly to southwesterly orientation, with symmetrically placed, uniformly cut simple marble markers placed at gravesites. Officers' graves were arranged in a circular pattern, radiating from a large flagpole which stood in the center of the cemetery. A ring of upright cannon was another feature of this new site, as of the old one. The enlisted ranks were inter-dispersed throughout the grounds. It was further noted (during the 1909 mass removal of these graves) that 1,100 graves contained no names - just numbers. These references were often hastily placed, mostly during the times of wars, in a slipshod method of accountability that was loosely "required" by the War Department, but was, more often than not, an expedient way to create mass graves for the soldiers who were difficult to identify, who had expired in battles or even plagues.

The only dwelling that existed on these grounds, from all accounts, was a substantial brick caretaker's cottage. Historically, this bears much greater significance, due to the fact that famed architect Samuel W. Brooks designed this structure, along with the Post Hospital of Fort Brown in 1869.

These grounds were used primarily for military burials; however, at various times, civilians were interred there, as well. In particular, during yellow fever epidemics, or during times when flooding made it difficult to access the City Cemetery, this cemetery was opened for the civilian dead. Also, on the subject of plagues, the map commissioned by Maj. Gen. Herron in 1864 indicates a vague reference to a site located lower down on the "Banco" or cut-off peninsula that made up the military reserve that Fort Brown occupied.²² Considering the mass deaths that occurred as a result of the cholera and yellow fever epidemics in the years between 1850 and 1867, these casualties most certainly were not allowed to overwhelm the military and municipal burial grounds. Once the new cemetery had an all-weather road extending to it,

Potter's Field served to receive such traffic. The Post Morgue on the military reserve was also very often brought into play as a holding compound for either quarantine cases or delayed burials.

There are also distinct references in historical lore that point to a practice of allowing burials of civilians on the high ground of the *estero* at Fort Brown as a provisional measure, due to the fact that floods had made transit (and burials) impossible on the lower grounds of both the "old" and the "new" city cemeteries. Customarily, once the floodwaters had receded and the route was passable, the dead were re-buried in the appropriate cemetery. One obstacle in particular that stood in this equation was the fact that, up until 1867, Washington Square, which stood between town center and the new cemetery, was a low-lying bog. This was filled in by prisoners at the direction of Mayor William Neale. Then also, an all-weather gravel road was completed, tying in the access to the new cemetery and the Corpus Christi Road.²⁵

The actual federal inclusion of the *estero* site in the National Cemetery System did not occur until the year 1867. The system was created through an Act by the 37th U.S. Congress, on July 17, 1862, and was subsequently approved by President Lincoln.²⁴ This Act dealt with various aspects of acquiring, creating, and maintaining a national grid-work of regional, federally operated cemeteries which were primarily intended to receive "soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."

A specific mention, dated 1890, stated that there were approximately 3,000 graves contained within this compound.²⁵ It sustained a metered growth onwards to 1908, when it was closed for further burials. An interesting mention in the press of the time stated that this coincided with the closure (de-commissioning) of Fort Brown by President Theodore Roosevelt "in the aftermath of the Negro raid (1906) on the city."²⁶ In 1909, all graves were exhumed and removed to permanent burial in the Arlington National Cemetery at Pineville, Louisiana.

At that time, a contractor by the name of N.E. Randall was awarded the low-bid rights (\$18,700) to take charge of the removal of bodily remains of the buried military at the Brownsville site, and to prepare such for transport to Louisiana for their "final" rest. The task took a workforce of 75 men a total of three months (June to September). As each set of remains was exhumed for the enlisted men (3,600), such debris was placed in a cloth bag and then placed in a 36-inch frame box, which was creosote treated. The 183 officers were transferred to full-length caskets. A total of five freight cars were utilized in the shipment of this cargo.²⁷

It might be said that Mr. Randall possessed the logistical advantage over the other bidders in the cemetery relocation project, by the fact that, in 1908, he had been awarded a contract by the City of Brownsville to install a municipal sewerage and drainage system. He obviously had equipment in place and manpower in the field to take on this additional project. This would also explain the mystery of how, when East Saint Charles Street was excavated, in 1997, to allow for roadway improvements, a section of a marble tombstone from Fort Brown was unearthed from deep below the street surface. Apparently, backfill had been transported to various low-lying areas to complete this construction project, and the "island" at Fort Brown lagoon was indeed known to be high ground by comparison. As it was a condition of the federal contract that the human remains were the only concern of the government, the marble grave markers were surrendered to the possession of the contractor. Older Brownsville residents remember well that the Nebraska Apartments (at 14th and Jefferson) incorporated these modular marble blocks as cornerstones in its construction.²⁸

For its sixty years of use, this site collected the slain soldiers of the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, various border bandit flair-ups, and the victims of the all-too-frequent tropical plagues that made this spot on the Rio Grande delta ever so difficult to tame. Upon the creation of the National Cemetery System, and Brownsville's entry into this network, also came the responsibility of this cemetery being the repository for regional military dead.

Specifically, the dead from Fort Ringgold, in Rio Grande City, were systematically brought to Brownsville for burial at the national site. "Commodore" Louis Cobolini held the position of caretaker of the abandoned post. For historical reference, an elderly man by the name of Robinson officially stood as caretaker over the cemetery.²⁹

D. The "Old" City Cemetery

Accommodations were made for a city burial ground, in 1848, at the time the original townsite was drafted by The New York-Brownsville Land Development Co. Charles Stillman, Samuel Belden, Simon Mussina, and Company set aside one "square" of land (350' x 350') at 12th Street and Monroe for such purposes. The unexpected surge in growth of this colony brought about a need to drastically reconsider a more ample accommodation within two years of the town's founding. By 1850, Brownsville's resident population went from negligible to 2,000 inhabitants.

The first written account that reveals the city's concern for additional space for the accommodation of their dead appears in the city council's minutes of April 20, 1850.³⁰ It was at that time that a committee was appointed to study the "present" burial place. This action was taken out of concern for: (a.) the lack of space for reasonable future growth, and (b.) the deplorable conditions of the actual graves. In Brownsville's formative years, there was a great deal of lawlessness in this frontier outpost. Such occurrences as grave robbing, general desecration, and theft of funerary objects was very common.

E. The "New" City Cemetery

The appointed City Council committee filed a report with council four days later, unanimously recommending an alternate site. It was also discussed that a protective fence would be needed as well. The site that gained favor with the committee members was a parcel of two squares of wooded land in the vicinity of Madison and 5th Streets, then approximately one-half mile (NE) out of the

city limits. This location spread along the West bank of the *Rejaca de las Hornelas*, at the Corpus Christi Bridge. It does appear unusual that, while all council minutes during this time contain a flurry of discussion on this matter, no other site is proposed, mentioned, or considered.

The city's claim to exclusive right to the property was drafted on February 22, 1851, though the deed to the land did not formally register until actions were taken on June 5, 1868. No matter how one attempts to explain this, it does appear to be rather unusual that it took so long to secure legal right to the land, due to the seriousness with which the people of that time dealt with absolute title to real estate. One suggested explanation may apply from the extremely lengthy legal battles that the New York-Brownsville Land Improvement Company (the Stillman Purchases) had with the original land grant interests, the Republic of Mexico, the Stillman/Mussina Partnership, and the State of Texas. These claims were not fully resolved until 1879, a full four years after Stillman's death.

On March 8, 1851, the city officially placed marker posts at each quadrant of the land, and, on October 24, 1853, it was formally surveyed by the county. In November of 1853, large segment tracts were divided up for use as Catholic Burial Grounds, Odd Fellows Rest/Masonic Lodge, and the *Sociedad Benito Juarez*. It is not clear through any written accounts whether the condition of the transfer of these compounds was linked to an obligation on their part to provide funding for a brick containment wall that was to be built to surround the entire cemetery. By one means or another, there are various loose references that, in or about the year 1867, the aforementioned religious and fraternal orders actually brought this project to completion. Prior to the building of this solid and substantial wall, written accounts describe clearly that the format that was utilized as a protective barrier consisted of a paltry ditch, filled with thorn-bearing shrubs and cactus.⁵¹ Local photographer Robert Runyon captured an image of one of these ditch barriers which was connected with the Matamoros City Cemetery in 1914.

The main body of ordinances governing the use and protection of this cemetery appears to have been written in two separate phases. The first grouping was completed and passed into city record on June 12, 1858, and the second batch was added on October 11, 1915. They basically set the hours of operation, established fees, prohibited nuisances, and delegated official responsibilities.

The Transition from “Old” to “New” Sites

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the confusion over the provision for a wall was minor by comparison to any attempt to discern from the archives when the “Old” City Cemetery was actually closed for burials. The city claims that formal measures were taken to declare the old site abandoned in the year 1864, after a major transfer of graves had taken place during 1863. One can only guess that, since this occurred during the Civil War years, shortly after the Confederates fled the city in 1863, that this action was associated with some manner of new “Union” order that the times produced. The only other mass transfer was reported in the year 1912. This year is more explainable, being that the “new” Cameron County Courthouse had just been completed, directly across from this site, and the city had an interest in improving the real estate surroundings. One historical interview actually states, however, that no building or structure appeared on the “Old *Campo Santo*” until the year 1890.⁵² No mention was made of what structure that was.

Notes inscribed in the margins of the old City Sexton’s ledgers occasionally refer to transfers, such as “Old Cemetery – removal of M. Kingsbury, Nov. 20, 1879, Blk 9, Lot 26.”⁵³ This clearly is traceable to an actual site in the newer location, but there are many burials that are designated “Old Cemetery” that bear dates of 1870, 1871, 1872, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1887, 1890, or even as late as 1910. One notable observation, however, is that the majority of these interments are infants and some few are of the very elderly.

Adding to the confusion, the custom of the turn of the century had been to refer to both sites as “The City Cemetery” or “The Old

City Cemetery”, depending upon to whom you were speaking. Naturally, to a younger County Clerk, or Assistant City Sextant, or City Secretary, both sites were old, and both were “City Cemetery.” The most revealing clue from the Sextant ledgers was the numerical plot layout. The old site was much smaller, containing only 700 gravesites at most. The newer site, however, had much longer blocks and many more of them. The notable family surnames were a defining clue as well, although the older prominent families most certainly began with space at the older site, and later transferred over to the new one. These transfers were made throughout the period from approximately 1852 through even as late as the 1890s. Unfortunately, the record-keeping methods during this period were not consistent or factually reliable. Another factor which adds to the difficulty of clearly tracing these burials is the overtly flowery handwriting of some of the officials on watch. Common references were made to family tombs, apparently known by all in a very familiar manner at that time to be located at a given lot and block site, only to be recorded as “family tomb.” When Brownsville had a population of five or ten thousand inhabitants, granted, everyone knew each other, but after seventy-five to one hundred years have passed, this is rather difficult to unravel.

The most fascinating cluster of references comes under the heading of “Masonic Section.” This is the vast heart of the cemetery, where a huge portion of the “notables” are interred. Unfortunately, there is no Block and Lot designation to these graves. Compounding this problem, the Masons have been exceedingly uncooperative in providing historical facts and in maintaining their sector.

F. The Potter’s Field

During the life of Brownsville City Cemetery, up until 1984, Brownsville’s (and many of Cameron County’s) indigents were interred in the low-lying commons along the resaca (lagoon) frontage of this burial ground. This area was set aside from the first days of cemetery usage for specifically that purpose. When the

land was charted and subdivided into Blocks and Lots, all of the terrain along the Eastern boundary that sloped down to the waters edge was considered irregular, and thus was not designated as part of the geometric alignment of the cemetery. From the point that this land broke downward, there originally was a dirt pathway that separated the formal cemetery from the commons. No order was ever exercised in the placement of these burials, and the considerable number out of the 30,000 claimed graves that this cemetery has received are surely stacked in multiple layers along this stretch.

In Lt. Chatfield's account of the area, there is clear mention of a high volume of indigent burials (approximately 100 per year in 1894) that were charged off to city departmental operating expense. This was a reference, surely, of a non-plague year. Imagine the difference that a bout of cholera (1858, 1866) or of yellow fever (1867, 1882) would make. There is a reference in the City Sextant's ledger of approximately twenty *Villistas* who were delivered to Potter's Field, casualties of the March 27, 1915, attack on Matamoros, led by General José Rodríguez.⁵⁴ Also during this period, the unclaimed bodies of hanged bandits and other criminals were plentiful. They all ended up in this lowland rest.

In the earlier years of the burials sent to Potter's Field, this did not present too great a problem for a number of reasons. Primarily, the public laws dealing with human remains were not as protective as they have grown to become. The practice actually relied on the caretaker's good judgment of terrain rotation, based on the anticipated rate of decomposition of both the human remains and the burial container. A three-point probe by steel rods was performed in an attempt to locate any conflicts for space that might be encountered in the digging of a new grave.

In modern times, paupers' "pine box" coffins have disappeared, and more slowly-deteriorating metals and plastics have come into use. This change in casket construction is greatly responsible for the discontinuing of burials in Brownsville City Cemetery's

Potter's Field. In 1967, Hurricane Beulah hit Brownsville, issuing a great amount of damage from wind and rain. The rain sent the water level to such a high level that this lowland was completely covered with water. The soil in Potter's Field was so de-stabilized that the more modern air-tight coffins rose to the surface and floated around aimlessly in the Town Resaca. It was at that time that the city administration resolved that no further burials were to be allowed beyond the original high ground plane of the cemetery.

As is the case with any city government, there are occasional "special favors" and deals that are struck for a brother-in-law, a favorite housekeeper, or such. Considering this, it is understandable that there is to be found the odd burial that slipped through the cracks. Thus, there are interments within the prohibited zone as late as 1984. In that year, however, an order was issued by a department of the state government (most likely the TNRCC) to absolutely cease from performing burials in the lowlands on the bank of the resaca, considering the effect that such action might have on the possible pollution of a natural waterway.

G. Buena Vista Burial Park

As we approach 1915, Brownsville was observing an increasing congestion of graves at the "new" site, and visions of much greater crowding were on the minds of locals, since the Valley was in a boom period after the arrival of the railroads (1904-1905). Land developers were bringing volumes of new settlers in from the Midwest, and no end was in sight. The times had changed, also, from the Victorian stiffness, prior to the turn of the century, to a lighter, brighter modern era. This was especially evident on a national level in the way burial "parks" were receiving attention in their planning. The "rural" tone of landscaped grounds was now the fashion, complete with influences of Frank Lloyd Wright, the "Prairie School," and the Arts and Crafts period of design.⁵⁵ Gone were the ornate vertical monuments, the Victorian aboveground tombs, and the wrought iron. Replacing this were flat, less "busy" horizontal grave markers. The car paths were purposely set in

meandering, park-like routes, winding through tranquil groves of ebony and mesquite. Also gone were the images of a cemetery that the city administrations rarely maintained against vandalism and neglect. As a private cemetery corporation, the promise was made that more of a guardianship was to be maintained, you could be sure. The developers of Buena Vista were there to satisfy this new approach, and with the creation of the Vida Nueva Subdivision for Brownsville's emerging worker class, and later, the Los Ebanos Subdivision for the more affluent, a whole new market was emerging in close proximity. The push was on for a development in the rural east section of the city, and that's where the new cemetery setting was planned. West Brownsville and the "West End" were long in the planning for dense residential for the established old guard, and even this outward movement was distancing Brownsville's new generations from the old heart of the city, and the cemetery that served it.

In June of 1915, Brownsville witnessed the opening of a shining new departure from its "old" cemetery, and Buena Vista promoters activated a hard marketing campaign to not only attract the new society of the area, but also to encourage the transfer of some of the established society leaders who had been at rest in the city cemetery over to the new accommodations. This plan met with some stunning examples of success, namely: Captain Mifflin Kenedy and family (though he left his wife's son by her first husband behind), John Young and family (though he left Samuel Gelston back at the crypt), Henry Miller, Nestor Maxan, Frank B. Armstrong, Salome Ballí McAllen and her second husband John McAllen (though they left her father and mother behind), John Closner (though he chose to leave his first wife behind). The ones that were transferred are often easy to spot, due to the more ornate, 19th-century appearance of their monuments, and, obviously, because, if they died prior to 1915, the new grounds were not in existence at that point. It appears that this "hard sell" was brief, and either the old guard were determined to stick to the plan and be laid to rest with their cronies, or the new sons and

daughters just made the switch as a result of the lack of space for another generation in the old setting.

The City Cemetery is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development because it demonstrates the unsystematic ways in which public services and public spaces were procured in 19th-century Texan cities and towns, which tended to be developed by profit-seeking businessmen and were only minimally equipped with civic spaces. Comparison with the town plans of Houston (1836), Galveston (1837), and Austin (1839) indicates that, although these cities incorporated more public spaces in their original town plans than did the owners of the Brownsville Town Company, none made provision for public burial grounds. In Houston, cemeteries were developed by religious congregations and fraternal orders well outside the initial townsite and its subsequent extensions. In Galveston, the developer, the Galveston City Company, re-platted four, contiguous, outlying blocks of the townsite in 1840-41 for a series of cemeteries managed by religious congregations and fraternal orders. The City Cemetery is additionally significant in the history of Community Planning and Development because of its adherence to the gridded block-and-lot pattern for organizing burial spaces within the cemetery, mirroring the system of organizing urban space in newly laid out 19th-century Texan cities. It followed a pattern that is not only visible in the city cemeteries of Galveston but also, much closer to Brownsville, in the *Panteón Municipal* (now called the *Panteón Viejo*) of Matamoros, which was established in 1832.⁵⁶ Occupying parts of two city blocks and now completely surrounded by urban development, the *Panteón Viejo* is smaller than City Cemetery. It is also more consistent in the density with which it was built out with brick vaults and crypts. Although there is shrubbery growing in the *Panteón Viejo*, it does not have the park-like feeling that pertains even in the most densely built sections of City Cemetery. City Cemetery and the *Panteón Viejo* both exhibit a pronounced likeness to such 19th-century New Orleans cemeteries as Lafayette Cemetery No. 1, in the Garden District of New Orleans.⁵⁷ The

tall, white-painted brick wall enclosing Lafayette Cemetery, the gridded organization of burial sites, and the density with which the cemetery was built with plastered and whitewashed brick vaults and crypts parallel the Matamoros and Brownsville sites. Despite the similarity in site layout of the Brownsville and Galveston cemeteries, the Galveston cemeteries lack the sense of spatial enclosure and architectural density typical of Brownsville's cemetery and those in Matamoros and New Orleans. The City Cemetery is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development because it materializes Creole space in its organization rather than the spatiality characteristic of mid-19th-century Anglo-American town cemeteries. This distinction is very visible in comparing City Cemetery to Hebrew Cemetery. Despite its bounding brick wall, Hebrew Cemetery is much more characteristic of mainstream Anglo-American practices in its dominant landscape organization of below-grade burials marked by headstones. City Cemetery is also significant in this area because it achieves this Creole spatiality while accommodating the later-19th-century taste for park-like landscaping. In this respect, City Cemetery is a hybrid of mid-19th-century regional cultural practices identified with the Creole coast and of succeeding, nationally disseminated Anglo-American cemetery improvement practices that emphasized landscape rather than architecture.

The arrangement of burials in the cemetery reflects this underlying orthogonal geometry. Various sections are identified in cemetery records as the Catholic Burial Grounds, Odd Fellows Rest, the Masonic Lodge Section, and the *Sociedad Benito Juárez* Section. However, only the Hebrew Cemetery is spatially separate from the rest of the cemetery. City Cemetery is significant in the area of community planning and development because it spatially demonstrates how American city governments in the 19th century financed public cemetery improvements by selling tracts within cemeteries to various religious and fraternal organizations, which used them to provide burial sites for their members.

City Cemetery is significant for its Creole funerary architecture as well as for its late 19th- and early 20th-century grave markers. Writing about 19th-century New Orleans funerary architecture, Peggy McDowell observed the prevalence of what she described as the stepped tomb and a more elaborate variant, the stepped tomb with elevated pedimented façade.³⁸ The stepped tomb, a flat-topped crypt with stepped courses of plastered brick to relieve the otherwise box-like proportion of the crypt, occurs in the substantial tomb of the Scottish-born architect-builder George More and his family, on the south side of the cemetery drive. The stepped portion atop the crypt carries inset plaques memorializing various family members, and is crowned with a Woodmen of the World tree trunk. The stepped tomb with a raised, pedimented frontispiece was especially popular along the lower Río Grande. A sandstone example with a carved sunburst in the pediment remains in the *Panteón Municipal* of the abandoned Tamaulipas town of Guerrero Viejo, upriver from Brownsville and Matamoros, and may have been the cemetery's receiving vault. In the small ranching community of La Grulla, Texas, downriver from Río Grande City, a line-up of buff brick tombs with exquisite detail of molded brick (all burial sites for members of the Longoria family, La Grulla's seigniorial family) date from the turn of the twentieth century and display imaginative variants on the pedimented frontispiece theme. In City Cemetery, the J. Eugene Lugadou crypt of the 1880s is faced with a frontispiece and steeply-profiled pediment. Even more imposing are family vaults of whitewashed plastered brick. The adjoining vaults of Lorenza S. and Remigio Garza, shared with the Victoriano Fernández family, of the 1880s, and of the Alexander Werbiski family are set on plastered brick plinths. Both have minimal surface articulation other than embedded plaques memorializing those buried inside. Both have heavy lidded cornices. The Garza-Fernández Vault is capped by a low pediment. The Werbiski Vault has a stepped pedestal centered above its front elevation, on which the figural statue of a kneeling, praying angel is mounted.

The most architecturally distinctive vault in City Cemetery is that of the grocer Lucio Bouis and his family, built in the 1880s.³⁹ It exhibits Doric architectural details (triglyphs, mutules, and engaged fluted corner columns) executed in molded brick, similar to the architectural decoration of the Silverio de la Peña House in Río Grande City, Texas, of 1886, by the German-born brick mason and builder Heinrich Portscheller (NR 1980). Brownsville possessed its own local variant of the regional Border Brick style of the late 19th century. The Bouis Vault does not resemble the Brownsville version of this regional method of construction. It is unique locally in its Portscheller style molded brick classicism. The Bouis Vault contributes to the significance of City Cemetery in the area of Architecture because of the singularity of its architectural decoration.

City Cemetery is significant for its late 19th- and early 20th-century funerary architecture, characteristic of funerary architecture of the period in other Texan towns and cities. An impressive example is the gray granite monument of Spanish-born merchant and coffee planter José Fernández, a Victorian classical pedestal on a stepped, molded stylobate that serves as a base for a standing figure of Jesus carrying the cross. The Fernández monument is set in a raised, curbed enclosure originally surrounded by a cast iron fence. Stone slabs set directly on the ground are inscribed with the names of the other Fernández family members buried there.

City Cemetery is significant in the area of Social History because it is associated with popular Mexican Catholic rituals memorializing the dead. W. H. Chatfield, whose promotional publication *The Twin Cities of the Border; Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico, and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande* (1893) is a primary source of information on everyday life along the lower Rio Grande at the end of the 19th century, described devotional customs associated with the *Día de los Muertos* (the Day of the Dead), when families decorated the graves of deceased members with personal artifacts expressing continuing bonds of affection and respect. "While the style and texture of the articles thus used present great diversity,

ranging from costly brass bedsteads set over children's graves, and canopied with the richest of lace curtains, to beer bottles and oyster shells stuck around the graves, the same degree of reverence appears to animate both rich and poor."⁴⁰ Even apart from occasions of solemn remembrance, graves in the non-elite section continue to be decorated with blooming flowers throughout the year.

City Cemetery also contributes to social history by consolidating, at a single site, generations of Brownsville families who contributed to the city's development in the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to the local notables interred there, it collects people of all social classes and economic circumstances to present a spatial representation of the city's demographics during the period of historical significance. The cemetery attests to the overwhelming influence of Mexican and Catholic culture on Brownsville. It attests to the cosmopolitanism of the city's merchant elite in the 19th century in the variety of European languages used in marker inscriptions. It also represents the ways that 19th-century Brownsville residents chose to affiliate themselves (by family, religion, or fraternal order).

The City Cemetery of Brownsville retains its historical significance to the extent that it represents the 19th- and early 20th-century funerary landscape of an isolated Texas-Mexican border town that, because of its trading connections, experienced contact with New Orleans in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. In conformance with prevailing attitudes and available technologies of the second half of the period of significance, the vegetation in City Cemetery is more profuse than it would have been during the first half of the period of significance. Neglected maintenance has resulted in the deterioration of some burial structures and especially in damage to and loss of fragile ironwork. Although the site is a cemetery, and therefore ordinarily not eligible for listing in the National Register, its association with the history of Brownsville, its design features which situate it in the distinctive regional subculture of the Texas-Tamaulipas borderland, and its association with graves

of persons of importance in the history of the lower Río Grande Valley and of Texas warrant exception to Criterion Consideration D. The City Cemetery of Brownsville preserves the largest and most intact array of Creole funerary architecture in Texas and, as such, is a significant outpost of 19th-century New Orleanian material culture. It is significant in the field of Social History because it conserves material artifacts and social customs representative of the distinctive Mexican cultural identity of the south Texas borderland. It also derives significance from its associations with the gravesites of the immigrant merchants, lawyers, ranchers, and artisans drawn first to Matamoros in the 1820s and then to Brownsville in the wake of the U.S-Mexican War and from the more numerous descendants of Spanish settlers who established European-American settlements along the lower Río Grande and its tributaries in the mid-18th century.

Since the 1980s, community groups in Brownsville have sought to conserve, preserve, and document the historical significance of City Cemetery. In 1983, the Cameron County Historical Commission erected Recorded Texas Historical Landmark Marker 539, commemorating the City Cemetery of Brownsville.

City Cemetery is significant in the area of social history as it contains the graves of persons significant in the regional history of the lower Río Grande during the period of historical significance. These include the substantial vaults and crypts of:

Name	Noteworthiness
The Alonso Family	Merchant from Spain, built Alonso Complex Los Dos Canones
The Cavazos Family	18 th century Spanish land grantees, San Jose de Carricitos Grant

The Cerda Family	Cattle rustlers ambushed in Texas Ranger raid of El Sauz Ranch 1902
The Reverend Hiram Chamberlain	Founded first Protestant Church (1850), daughter Henrietta married Capt. Richard King
Jose Fernandez	Spanish immigrant nephew of Simon Celaya and Jose San Roman, plantation owner
Miguel Fernández	Younger brother of Jose, shared in mercantile empire
The Galbert Family	Merchants of goods on Santa Cruz boardwalk
Capt. Sanforth Kidder	Translator for Gen. Taylor's force. Arrived prior to Texas Independence (1836)
The Marcilie-Fernández Family	Tomb contains the body of Frank Natus, killed in the Negro Riot of 1907
The McAllen-Ballí Family	Scotsman McAllen married widow of John Young, Salome Balli, with Spanish land grant
The Putegnat Family	Various sites for these Civil War veterans, early pharmacist, and merchants
The San Román Family	Arrived prior to Mexican American War. Steamboat owner, banker, railroad financier
Alexander Werbiski	Early pioneer, rancher, merchant
The Yturria Family	Married into Spanish Land Grant holdings, merchant, rancher

Family compounds that are (or once were) surrounded by iron fencing include:

James G. Browne	Arrived with Gen. Taylor, headed troop housing construction, merchant
W. N. Browne	Brother of above, mortician
Harriett Robbins Case	Niece of Charles Stillman (city founder)
José Celaya	Son of Simon Celaya, involved in the railroad, banking
Dr. Charles Combe	Surgeon Maj. Under Gen Bankhead McGruder, Civil War. Son was Brownsville Mayor
Capt. Robert Dalzell	Steamboat Captain during the Mexican American War, built Metropolitan Building
Henry Field	Arrived at Civil War, lead hide yard/ranch supplies/ lumber
Benjamin Hicks	Member of Butler/Vivier/Powers/Browne/Combes dynasty
Celestine Jagou	French plantation owner, first to plant bananas and Sea Island cotton
Capt. James Kelly	Steamboat Captain, veteran of Civil War
Mifflin Kenedy	Steamboat Captain, partner with Captain King, owner of Kenedy Ranch
Joseph Kleiber	Pioneer pharmacist, financier of Rio Grande Railroad
Henry Krausse	From Germany, merchant

Michael Lahey Family	Texas Ranger, saloon owner, member of Brownsville Rifles
James Landrum	Married into Powers dynasty, owned Landrum Plantation
Henry Miller	Built Stillman House, early partner with Webb Pharmacy, built Miller Hotel
William Neale	Veteran of Mexican War of Independence (1821), arrived prior to Texas Independence
Capt. Stephen Powers	Veteran of Mexican American War, present at coronation of Queen Victoria, lawyer
Rentfro Family	Family involved in original Texas Constitutional Convention, cotton brokers, lawyers
Michael Schodts	Belgian merchant, County Clerk, assassinated on a Brownsville street
Fred Starck	Partner with Rabb in large plantation, pioneer agriculturalist
John Vivier	French, merchant, major financier for Vivier Opera House
Wagner	Banker, land owner, member of Butler/Powers Dynasty
James B. Wells	Capt. Richard King's attorney, power broker, political boss
H. Woodhouse	Charles Stillman partner, cotton broker, railroad financier

Noteworthy individual monuments include the following:

Juan Alamía	Roughrider with Roosevelt in the Spanish American War, hanged during Mexican Revolution
Joseph Alexander	Civil War cotton, arms, munitions broker, shot by one of Cortina's bandits
Israel Bigelow	First County Judge, first Brownsville Mayor, introduced bill to form Hidalgo County
Santiago Brito	Cameron County Sheriff, Brownsville City Marshall, solved great train robbery of 1890
R. B. Creager	State Chairman for Republican Party, brought Pres. Warren Harding to Brownsville
Franklin Cummings	Civil War Veteran, son founded the original school system for Cameron County
J. G. Fernández	Premier banker in south Texas, founded Merchants National Bank and State National Bank
E. H. Goodrich	Civil War Quartermaster at Fort Brown, prominent attorney
Emilio Forto	Cameron County Judge, Sheriff, founded Brownsville Country Club, 1 st National Bank
Dr. Charles McManus	Assistant Surgeon to Andrew Jackson, Smith's Brigade, General Taylor
Rafael Morales	Veteran of Battle of San Jacinto on Gen. Santa Anna's side

Patrick Shannon	From Ireland, Applied for original township charter for "Shannondale" in 1848
Adrián Vidal	Mifflin Kenedy's stepson, hanged by Maximilian's French forces in Mexico

Executive Director
Friends of the Brownsville Historic City Cemetery.

Endnotes

- 1 This research was originally done for a National Register Application.
- 2 I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Stephen Fox of Rice University for his assistance in providing technical help regarding architectural observations and social history tie-ins.
- 3 The Robert Runyon Photograph Collection [002769] Courtesy of The Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin.
- 4 Board of Aldermen Minutes, August 28, 1855, City Secretary, City of Brownsville, Texas, November, 2004.
- 5 Interview with Ruben Edelstein, Hebrew Benevolent Society, February 13, 2008.
- 6 Interview with Marvin Brown, Caretaker of Hebrew Cemetery (after Morris Edelstein), February 18, 2008.
- 7 Chauncey Devereux Stillman, *Charles Stillman, 1810-1875* (New York: privately printed, 1956), p. 31.
- 8 Interview with Larry Holtzman, Hebrew Benevolent Society of Brownsville and Matamoros, Cemetery Director, February 2, 2008.
- 9 Field research on archeological project conducted by Texas Historical Commission, October, 2004, Brownsville Original Cemetery site, Dr. Jack Keller, Project Archeologist, E. Fernandez, Historical Research Assistant.
- 10 SOCIEDADES MUTUALISTAS, *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Brownsville, Texas," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/ves1.html> (accessed February 7, 2008).
- 11 WOODMEN OF THE WORLD. <http://www.woodmen.org>.
- 12 Interview with family of Celestine Jagou, October 15, 2007.

- 13 Kearney and Knopp, *Boom and Bust: The Historical Cycles of Matamoros and Brownsville* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1991), pp. 88-89.
- 14 *The Daily Ranchero*. Copies of this Brownsville newspaper from 1865 to 1870 have been microfilmed.
- 15 Lt. W. H. Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border: Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico, and the Country of the Lower Río Grande* (Brownsville: Brownsville Historical Association, 1959 [first published 1893]), insert.
- 16 Interview with Celvia Rodriguez, Buena Vista Burial Park, Brownsville, Texas.
- 17 Interview with Homero Vera, Museum Coordinator, Kenedy Ranch Museum, Sarita, Texas, March 2, 2004.
- 18 Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border*, p. 28.
- 19 Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border*, p. 28.
- 20 The Robert Runyon Photograph Collection [002769], Courtesy of The Center for American History, The University of Texas, Austin.
- 21 Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border*, p. 28.
- 22 City of Brownsville, Department of Planning, Archive Map, 1864 Commissioned by Maj. General Herron, attached to Fort Brown, Texas.
- 23 John C. Rayburn and Virginia Kemp Rayburn, with the assistance of Ethel Neale Fry, *Century of Conflict – Incidents in the Lives of William Neale and William A. Neale* (Waco: Texian Press, 1966), p. 55.
- 24 William Steere, "Evolution of the National Cemetery System 1865 – 1880," *Quartermaster Review* (May/ June, 1953), Quartermaster Foundation, U. S. Army.
- 25 Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border*, p. 28.
- 26 S. V. Canales, Cemeteries of Texas.com.
- 27 S. V. Canales, Cemeteries of Texas.com.
- 28 Interview with Anthony Gomez, August, 1985.
- 29 S. V. Canales, Cemeteries of Texas.com.
- 30 Board of Aldermen Minutes, April 20, 1850, City Secretary, City of Brownsville, Texas, November, 2004.
- 31 Betty Bay, *Historic Brownsville Original Townsite Guide* (Brownsville: Brownsville Historical Association, 1980), p. 199.
- 32 Betty Bay, *Historic Brownsville Original Townsite Guide*, p. 198.
- 33 *Ledger of Burials*, City Sexton, City of Brownsville.
- 34 E. W. Potter and B. M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin #41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Grounds*, U. S. Department of the Interior National Park Service.

- 35 Mary Louise Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture, Volume III: The Cemeteries*. (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 24-26.
- 36 Kearney and Knopp, *Boom and Bust*, p. 31.
- 37 Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture, Volume III: The Cemeteries*, pp. 24-26.
- 38 Christovich, *New Orleans Architecture, Volume III: The Cemeteries*, pp. 74-75.
- 39 Mario L. Sánchez (ed.), *A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture, and Historic Designations of the Lower Río Grande Heritage Corridor* (Austin: Los Caminos del Río Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission, 1991).
- 40 Chatfield, *The Twin Cities of the Border*, p. 30.

Arte y cultura en Matamoros

by

María Luisa Pacheco

El Municipio de Matamoros en el noreste del Estado de Tamaulipas colinda al sur con el Municipio de San Fernando, al este con el Golfo de México, al oeste con los Municipios de Valle Hermoso y Río Bravo, y al norte con Brownsville, Texas.¹ Esta población que alberga alrededor de medio millón de habitantes es una de las seis ciudades tamaulipecas que colindan con Estados Unidos. Tamaulipas colinda con Estados Unidos en varios puntos: Matamoros-Brownsville; Río Bravo-Pharr; Reynosa-Hidalgo; Gustavo Díaz Ordaz-Los Ébanos; Miguel Alemán-Roma; Nuevo Laredo-Laredo. De las seis ciudades que colindan con Texas, Matamoros es la que goza de mayor número de museos² y consecuentemente ofrece una oportunidad de enriquecimiento cultural enorme.

Para comprender la riqueza cultural de Matamoros, hay que remontarnos al siglo pasado. A mediados del siglo diecinueve, Matamoros vivió un auge económico debido a los recursos generados por Puerto Bagdad. Éste era el único puerto que movía las ricas cosechas de algodón y tabaco producidas en el sur de Estados Unidos. En este período de bonanza se edificaron varios edificios de suma importancia para la sociedad como el Fuerte Casamata, el Colegio de San Juan, el Teatro de la Reforma, y el antiguo hospital militar (ahora Instituto de Bellas Artes). Un siglo después, tras deterioro y reconstrucción, estos edificios continúan de pie en la Heróica Matamoros.

No sólo existen edificios históricos en Matamoros, sino innumerables individuos y asociaciones interesadas en la historia y enriquecimiento de la población. Entre las organizaciones culturales, se encuentran la Sociedad de Historia, Geografía, y Estadística; el Ateneo Literario José Arrese; el Círculo Literario Dr. Manuel

F. Rodríguez Brayda; la Red Cultural Ayocuan; y la Asociación Amigos del Museo Casamata. El Municipio también cuenta con un historiador cuya misión es rescatar los acontecimientos del pasado y anotar los hechos históricos del presente para las futuras generaciones.³

Para apoyar el desarrollo y la cultura en Matamoros existen varios organismos: a nivel nacional – el Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (CONACULTA), a nivel estatal – el Instituto Tamaulipeco para la Cultura y las Artes (ITLCA), y a nivel municipal – el Instituto Matamorenses Para la Cultura y Las Artes (IMACULTA).

Enfocándonos en el movimiento cultural local, nos detenemos en el Instituto Matamorenses Para la Cultura y Las Artes. IMACULTA se creó en Matamoros en 2004 con la intención de rescatar, preservar, y difundir el patrimonio histórico y cultural de Matamoros, así como promover la educación artística y la investigación cultural, y difundir sus resultados en el ámbito municipal, estatal, nacional, y universal.⁴ Imaculta cuenta con seis espacios de cultura: el Museo Casamata, el Museo del Agrarismo Mexicano, la Galería Municipal de Arte Albertina, el Teatro de la Reforma, el Instituto Regional de Bellas Artes, y el Parque Olímpico Cultura y Conocimiento. Un director general supervisa el funcionamiento de todos los espacios y a los directores individuales de cada plantel. La tarea de rescate cultural emprendido por IMACULTA es patrocinada por el Municipio de Matamoros y el gobierno estatal. Cabe mencionar que, aparte de la invaluable entrega de IMACULTA a la cultura matamorenses, existen otras instituciones culturales no afiliadas a ella, como el Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI, el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Tamaulipeco, y el Festival de Otoño, entre otras.

Museo Casamata

Entrada: Gratuita

Operación: martes a viernes 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

sábados y domingos 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Para enterarse de la importancia del Municipio de Matamoros en la historia de México y la región, es indispensable una visita al Museo Casamata situado en la Colonia Modelo en la esquina de Santos Degollado y Guatemala. El museo se centra en un fuerte que es la única estructura superviviente del sistema de defensa en Matamoros en el siglo diecinueve. Después de haber sido utilizado como talabartería y, en un tiempo, como bodega de la Junta Federal de Mejoras Materiales, la estructura vivió en el abandono. En 1970, durante la Presidencia del Lic. Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, se reconstruyó el edificio. En el 2005, la Presidencia Municipal tomó interés y, por segunda vez, hubo una reconstrucción del Museo Casamata.

El museo consta de una serie de edificios y jardines que rodean al fuerte. Al atravesar la entrada principal por la calle Santos Degollado, a la izquierda, el visitante se encuentra con una biblioteca que se especializa en la historia de la región; a su derecha, con una sala que alberga el Archivo Histórico, y la Hemeroteca. En la hemeroteca se encuentra material desde 1949. Periódicos fuera de publicación, como *La Voz de la Frontera* y *La Opinión*, se pueden consultar ahí. Al frente de la entrada principal se sitúa la Esplanada Eliseo Paredes que funge como marco para diferentes eventos culturales y sociales. A su izquierda, los edificios albergan las oficinas y las primeras tres salas del museo.

En la sala 1, el visitante entra al mundo del siglo 19 con la historia del origen y desarrollo de Matamoros. A continuación, se encuentran las salas 2 y 3, que presentan las diversas etapas de conflictos, bonanza, declive económico, y revalorización de Matamoros. Enfrente de la entrada principal, tras la esplanada, se encuentra la estructura que era el Fuerte. Ahí se encuentran las salas 4 y 5, con "La Línea del Tiempo." En ella, se muestra la historia militar de Matamoros desde finales del siglo 18 hasta principios del siglo 20.

A espaldas del fuerte, se encuentra el Jardín Fortificado, rodeado de palmeras, representando las defensas que existieron en Matamoros en el siglo pasado. Un plano de los 13 fortines que

existieron en el área está colocado en una de las paredes que se encuentran alrededor del Jardín Fortificado. A la izquierda del jardín, se encuentra el Auditorio María del Pilar. Este recinto, con una capacidad para cien personas, es un foro para conciertos, conferencias, presentaciones de libros, y una variedad de actividades culturales. A un costado del auditorio y del Jardín Fortificado, se encuentra la Sala de Exposiciones Temporales.

La Casamata cuenta también con un Archivo Oral y una Fototeca que permiten la conservación de una parte del patrimonio cultural inmaterial en un formato digital. Éstas proveen información sobre la historia colectiva y personal de habitantes de Matamoros por medio de entrevistas y cientos de fotografías. Durante el recorrido del museo el visitante también tiene acceso al documental “A la orilla del Bravo.”

La Casamata no sólo informa sobre la historia de Matamoros, sino que es el punto de reunión de grupos culturales como Asociación Amigos del Museo Casamata, Ateneo Literario José Arrese, Red Cultural Ayocuan, y Rotarac Matamoros Siglo XXI. Todas estas organizaciones sesionan semanal o mensualmente. El museo Casamata es indudablemente un baluarte de enriquecimiento histórico y cultural, no sólo para el matamorenses, sino para cualquier individuo que atraviesa su portal.⁵

Museo del Agrarismo Mexicano

Entrada: Gratuita

Operación: martes a viernes 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
sábado y domingo 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

El Museo del Agrarismo Mexicano, inaugurado el 10 de abril de 2002, se encuentra en el Ejido Lucio Blanco en la Avenida Lauro Villar, Km. 6. 5. El museo está situado en el lugar donde el General Lucio Blanco hizo la primera repartición de tierra en México, en 1913.⁶ No en balde lleva el ejido el nombre de dicho general, ni tampoco es coincidencia que una estatua del General se encuentra al frente del museo (con el Gral. Francisco Villa a su izquierda, y el Gral. Emiliano Zapata a la derecha).

El museo consta de un solo edificio color naranja en forma de U. En el centro de la U se encuentra una pequeña área de plantío utilizada en talleres de agricultura. La entrada al museo consiste de un vestíbulo con fotos históricas de Matamoros en la pared izquierda. A la derecha del vestíbulo se empieza el recorrido al museo. El visitante recorre seis pequeñas salas que lo llevan a través del movimiento agrario en México, recorriendo el Porfiriato, la Revolución Mexicana, la época Postrevolucionaria, y el Cardenismo.

A la izquierda del vestíbulo, se encuentra una sala utilizada para conferencias y exhibiciones temporales. Actualmente, en conmemoración del aniversario del centenario de la Revolución Mexicana (1910-2010), se exhibe una exposición sobre Francisco Villa. Ésta incluye múltiples fotografías de Villa, una cartulina original redactada en inglés, ofreciendo una recompensa de \$500.00 dls. por información que llevase a la captura de Villa, y un traje que perteneció a dicho General (préstamo del Museo Casamata). 2009 fue escogido como año de Pancho Villa, y – como consecuencia – se ha estado exhibiendo la clásica película mexicana *Vámonos con Pancho Villa* en diversas ocasiones. (En el 2010, Emiliano Zapata será el homenajeado, y el museo ya cuenta con varios artículos que pertenecieron a Zapata. Éstos fueron donados por su hijo Diego. Esta exhibición se inaugurará el 10 de abril, que conmemora no sólo la apertura del museo, sino el asesinato de Zapata el 10 de abril de 1919.)

Al igual que la Casamata, el museo no es sólo hogar de reliquias históricas, sino un centro educativo y cultural. El museo provee al público más que la historia del agrarismo en México. El museo cuenta con cuatro talleres durante el año: en la primavera el de plastilina; en el verano el de manualidades; en el otoño el de calaveras de azúcar y flores de papel; y en el invierno el de piñatas. Estos talleres artesanales están abiertos al público en general: niños, jóvenes, y adultos, sin costo por la instrucción. El participante sólo es responsable por el costo del material utilizado. El museo también ofrece al público celebraciones en fechas especiales como el 4 de junio- la toma de Matamoros en 1913, y el 10 de

abril- el aniversario del Museo del Agrarismo. El 31 de octubre se homenajea a héroes locales.⁷

Galería Municipal de Arte Albertina

Entrada: Gratuita

Operación: martes a viernes: 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

sábados: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

La Galería Municipal de Arte Albertina está situada en el centro de la ciudad, a una cuadra de la Plaza Hidalgo (plaza principal), en la esquina de la Calle 7 y Morelos. Esta galería se encuentra en la planta baja de un edificio cuya construcción data a 1860. La galería lleva el nombre “Albertina” en honor a la Sra. Albertina Domínguez de García, quien fuera la propietaria del recinto.⁸

La Galería Albertina se inauguró en octubre del 2005 con la finalidad de ser un escaparate para los artistas plásticos de Matamoros. Aunque ese fue su fin incipiente, ahora frecuentemente se presentan trabajos artísticos de otros estados de la República Mexicana, del Distrito Federal, y del Valle de Texas. La galería, en su corta trayectoria, ya ha expuesto a 64 artistas.

La galería, con capacidad para aproximadamente 25 obras, expone exhibiciones individuales y colectivas de artes plásticas: fotografía, pintura, esculturas, e instalaciones de arte contemporáneo. El número de participantes en las exhibiciones colectivas pueden variar de dos individuos hasta cuarenta. La galería presenta dos exposiciones colectivas al año: una durante el Festival de Otoño, en octubre, y la otra, en febrero, durante las fiestas del Charro. En la presentación de las Fiestas del Charro, se presentan artistas de ambos lados de la frontera.

La galería está disponible a aficionados y profesionales. Un artista con deseos de exhibir su obra la presenta, y ésta es examinada por el director de la Galería Albertina y los museólogos de Imaculta. Una vez aprobada, la exposición puede tener una duración entre una y tres semanas, dependiendo de la trayectoria del artista. La

Galería Albertina provee un excelente espacio para generar y promocionar las artes visuales en Matamoros⁹

Teatro de la Reforma

El Teatro de la Reforma también se encuentra en el centro, a una cuadra de la plaza principal, pero en la Calle 6^a y Abasolo. Este recinto es el foro para obras de teatro locales y foráneas, conferencias, congresos, festivales de academias de danza, y eventos escolares y políticos. Mas no es solamente el foro para eventos culturales, políticos, y sociales, sino es uno de los edificios con mayor historia en Matamoros.

La construcción del teatro comenzó en 1861 con un diseño del arquitecto norteamericano Henry A. Peeler, quien intentó replicar el Teatro de la Opera de Paris. La inauguración fue en 1865. El teatro gozó durante muchos años con la presencia de personajes celebres: Porfirio Diaz fue homenajeado en el teatro a finales del siglo diecinueve; Venustiano Carranza asistió a un baile a principios del siglo veinte; Jaime Nuno condujo la banda municipal en celebración del cincuentenario de haberse interpretado por primera vez el Himno Nacional. En 1956, el teatro fue demolido, y, en 1957, se reconstruye y se convierte en una sala cinematográfica. En 1992, una vez más, se reconstruye y reinaugura, quedando en su forma actual con una capacidad de seiscientos noventa y ocho butacas. Por más de un siglo este recinto ha sido el escenario a un sinnúmero de artistas locales, nacionales, e internacionales. Es indudable que dicho espacio está ligado a la identidad matamorenses.¹⁰

Instituto Regional de Bellas Artes Matamoros

El Instituto de Bellas Artes (I.R.B.A.M.), situado en la Zona Centro, en la Calle 8 entre las calles Hidalgo e Iturbide, es una institución más en Matamoros que ha contribuido a la formación cultural de la población desde 1969. Su inauguración el 3 de noviembre fue en una casa antigua en la Calle Abasolo entre 4^a y 5^a, pero, en 1971, logra la concesión de un edificio antiguo.

Ese edificio antiguo en la calle 8 estaba abandonado. Se había iniciado su construcción en 1855 como hospital Florencio Anaya. Durante la Revolución Mexicana (1810-1921), funge como hospital militar. Después de la Revolución se convierte en el hospital civil de Matamoros, pero, cuando se construye el hospital Alfredo Pumarejo, el edificio queda abandonado. En 1971, IRBMA logra la concesión del edificio del hospital abandonado.¹¹ En 1973, el edificio recibe la distinción por el gobierno municipal de convertirse en Edificio Histórico.

Desde 1972 el instituto ubicado en la calle 8 ha contribuido al enriquecimiento cultural de Matamoros. El ambiente cultural se palpa de inmediato al entrar en el recinto. En la oficina, al lado derecho de la entrada principal, se encuentran dos vitrinas con más de treinta muñequitas vestidas de trajes típicos mexicanos. En el mismo cuarto se encuentran dos paredes tapizadas de libros que están disponibles no sólo para personal docente y los alumnos, sino a los padres de familia que con frecuencia esperan a sus hijos mientras éstos reciben su instrucción cultural.

Actualmente, Bellas Artes imparte clases de dibujo y pintura, canto, danza folklórica, baile moderno, artesanías, ballet clásico, piano, guitarra popular, batería, y teatro, por una módica cuota de \$250.00 pesos mensuales. Las clases se imparten en las tardes, tres veces por semana: lunes, miércoles, y viernes. Todas las clases están abiertas a niños y adultos.

El instituto no solamente funciona durante el ciclo escolar. Durante el verano, por seis semanas, se ofrece para niños de cinco a catorce años un curso interdisciplinario de música, artes plásticas, baile, y teatro. Este curso es de lunes a viernes de 9.00 a.m. a 12 p.m., con un costo de \$450.00 pesos. Por las tardes, se ofrecen los talleres de verano con los cursos ofrecidos durante el año escolar, pero con una duración de seis semanas por \$200.00 pesos.

Los alumnos del instituto no son los únicos que se enriquecen con el Instituto de Bellas Artes, pues ellos participan en muchos eventos culturales del municipio, como: el Festival del Mar (que

se lleva a cabo en las playas de Matamoros durante la Semana Santa); en el Festival de la Frontera (el cual se realiza en el mes de mayo); y en el Festival Internacional de Otoño (en octubre de cada año). Al participar en dichos eventos, los alumnos comparten y enriquecen al público en general.¹²

Parque Olímpico Cultural y Conocimiento

El Parque Cultural Olímpico, que se encuentra en la Colonia Jardín en Avenida Constitución #57, es más que un parque. Las áreas verdes y de descanso son una mínima parte del Parque Olímpico. Las instalaciones cuentan con ocho facilidades que están a disposición del público: hemeroteca, mapoteca, biblioteca, videoteca, laboratorio de cómputo, sala audiovisual, ludoteca, y auditorio al aire libre. Las instalaciones también albergan las oficinas de IMACULTA.¹³

La sala audiovisual con una capacidad de setenta personas, está a disposición de asociaciones civiles (no lucrativas) con necesidad de un espacio para conferencias. Una sala de juntas también está disponible para organizaciones civiles con necesidad de un espacio para juntas. En la sala de exposiciones los artistas locales encuentran un espacio para exhibir su obra. El laboratorio de cómputo cuenta con computadoras con servicio de Internet, cuya única restricción es el uso de Messenger. El auditorio, que tiene capacidad para 1,700 personas, es utilizado principalmente durante el Festival de Otoño que se lleva a cabo anualmente.

Las instalaciones no sólo proveen espacios para la transmisión de información cultural y artística, sino para su desarrollo. La ludoteca ofrece diariamente un área de juegos educativos para niños de cinco a nueve años. Mas no solamente los niños se enriquecen al asistir a la ludoteca. Con frecuencia, las madres, durante la espera de los hijos, tienen la oportunidad de participar en talleres de manualidades (como globoflexia – el arte de hacer figuras con globos).

En las instalaciones del parque olímpico, también se imparten clases de pintura a niños y adultos todos los sábados de 9:00 a.m.

a 12:00 p.m. Al igual, se imparten clases de oratoria para niños los sábados durante el año escolar En el verano, hay talleres de diferentes temas culturales durante tres semanas para niños de cinco a once años. Las clases son gratuitas pero los niños son responsables por el costo del material utilizado.

Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI

Otro recinto cultural e histórico es la Escuela Superior de Música Colegio San Juan Siglo XXI, ubicado a una cuadra de la plaza principal en la esquina de González y 4^a #57. Este edificio ha funcionado durante numerosos años como recinto educativo. En 1858, el Gobernador de Tamaulipas decretó la creación del Instituto Científico y Literario San Juan. Ésa fue la primera institución de enseñanza superior en la frontera. En 1913, en la toma de Matamoros por el General Lucio Blanco, los revolucionarios instalaron el cuartel general en el recinto del Instituto, pero en la época posrevolucionaria, el recinto volvió a funcionar como local académico al convertirse en una secundaria federal. El edificio estuvo abandonado varios años después de fungir como secundaria pública. En 1994, el gobierno municipal declara al inmueble un edificio histórico, y surge un plan para su remodelación. En el año 2000, el gobierno decreta una escuela de música en el edificio.

El colegio, afiliado a la Secretaria de Educación Pública, ofrece el Bachillerato General con Formación Musical y Licenciatura en Música. El joven que asiste a dicha institución para cursar preparatoria, no sólo recibe la instrucción de bachillerato tradicional requerida por la Secretaria, sino un bachillerato en música simultáneamente. El colegio provee renta de instrumentos musical en caso de que los alumnos carezcan de ellos. A nivel licenciatura existen cuatro especialidades: Composición, Ejecución Pianística, Ejecución y Enseñanza del Canto, y Ejecución y Enseñanza Instrumental. El estudiante en Enseñanza Instrumental escoge entre guitarra, violín, viola, cello, contrabajo, flauta, clarinete, saxofón, trompeta, corno francés, trombón, tuba o percusiones. El colegio frecuentemente ofrece conciertos sin costo alguno a la

comunidad y contribuye al Festival de Otoño no solo con su participación musical, sino con sus instalaciones.¹⁴

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Tamaulipas

Entrada general \$15.00 pesos

Estudiantes /INSEN \$ 10.00 pesos

Entrada gratuita: niños menores de 10 años

Entrada gratuita: miércoles

Operación: martes a sábado 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. y domingo
12:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Este museo, comúnmente conocido como MACT, está ubicado en la Colonia Jardín a un costado del Parque Olímpico, en la Av. Constitución y 5ª. MACT es patrocinado a nivel estatal por ITCA (Instituto Tamaulipeco para la Cultura y las Artes) y nacional por Conaculta (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes). El edificio del museo se inauguró en 1969 como un Centro Artesanal dedicado al fomento de las artesanías. A finales de la década de los 80 y principios de los 90, funcionó como Museo del Maíz. A partir de 1998, funcionó como Centro Cultural Mario Pani. A partir de 2002, se convirtió en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo. El objetivo del museo no es sólo distribuir, producir, consumir, y analizar las artes visuales de Tamaulipas, sino ser receptor de propuestas artísticas del arte nacional e internacional.¹⁵

El museo cuenta con tres salas de exposición, un teatro al aire libre, un patio central, y una terraza. En las instalaciones se realizan no sólo exposiciones sino talleres de enriquecimiento cultural. Dentro de las instalaciones, también se encuentra la Tienda de Artesanías de Fonart, cuya misión es no solamente apoyar a los artesanos de México, sino preservar los valores de la cultura tradicional al ofrecer productos artesanales de calidad para el mercado nacional e internacional. El MACT ofrece un enriquecimiento invaluable a toda la zona fronteriza. El museo ha exhibido obras de artistas locales, nacionales, e internacionales como Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, y Joan Miro.

Festival de Otoño

Hablando de arte y cultura en Matamoros, es imprescindible mencionar del Festival de Otoño, un evento cultural anual que se inició en 1993. En octubre, cuando el festival se lleva a cabo, Matamoros se vuelve un foro para artistas nacionales e internacionales. Se presentan espectáculos de danza, teatro, música, artes plásticas, conferencias, y programas infantiles. Durante un período de dos semanas, grupos artísticos, extranjeros y locales, deleitan y enriquecen culturalmente al público matamorenses. En dicho festival hay innumerables recintos: escuelas, plazas, parques, museos, y teatros abren sus puertas para ser plataformas de espectáculos culturales,.

El festival está abierto para el público en general independiente de los recursos económicos, pues aunque el costo puede ser alto en el Teatro de la Reforma, hay múltiples eventos sin costo alguno, como las veladas culturales en la plaza principal cada noche. El Festival de Otoño abre las avenidas para enriquecimiento cultural, no sólo con sus innumerables presentaciones, sino al rendir homenaje a un artista tamaulipeco. Este reconocimiento público refuerza y alienta la creatividad artística de los tamaulipecos. Este evento multidisciplinario se organiza por el Patronato del Festival de Otoño, con apoyo del Instituto Tamaulipeco para la Cultura y las Artes, la Presidencia Municipal y el Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

Conclusión

Es indudable que la Heroica Matamoros es dueña de un gran acervo cultural. La importancia geográfica e histórica es reconocida, pero ahora hay que concientizarnos del existente baluarte en cuestión de las artes. Y, de ninguna manera, se puede ignorar que gran parte de la cultura existente se le brinda al público sin costo alguno. La falta de dinero no es un impedimento para deleitar al espíritu con el arte. La cultura y el arte están arraigados en Matamoros, ya sea para recibir instrucción o simplemente disfrutar como espectador. Es imperativo concientizarse de lo que

Matamoros ofrece. Negar el arte, la cultura, la historia, es negar la existencia misma.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Notas

- 1 Muchas gracias a Elia García Cruz para su ayuda editando el español de este artículo.
- 2 Dato proporcionado por la Srita. Lic. Azucena Morón Marín en las oficinas de IMACULTA
- 3 El primer historiador fue don Eliseo Paredes Manzano, seguido por Emilio Sáenz, y Eleazar Ávila. El actual historiador es el Ing. Clemente Rendón.
- 4 El objetivo de IMACULTA fue proporcionado por la Sra Elba Macluf Lajud, actual directora de dicha institución.
- 5 La actual directora del museo es la Sra. Lic. Rosa Leonor García Luna Martínez quien proporcionó información sobre la Casamata.
- 6 En 1913 Lucio Blanco, representando al gobierno constitucional, tomó Matamoros apropiándose de la Hacienda Los Borregos propiedad de Feliz Díaz, sobrino de Porfirio Díaz. El rancho pertenecía a la Hacienda La Sauteña propiedad de Iñigo Noriega, hombre de confianza de Porfirio Díaz. El General Blanco repartió la tierra entre peones. Ése fue el comienzo de la Revolución Agrarista – la lucha por una justa distribución de tierra. Fue el primer reparto de tierras de la Revolución Mexicana.
- 7 La actual directora del Museo de Agrarismo Mexicano es la Srita. Monica Robles. Su interés y amor por el Museo es evidente en su conversación.
- 8 Su hija, la Sra. Delia Perla, quién habita el segundo piso del inmueble, ha dispuesto que una vez fallecida el edificio forme parte del patrimonio cultural de Matamoros. El patronato que administra la Galería Albertina utilizará el recinto como un espacio cultural.
- 9 El actual director de la Galería Municipal de Arte de Matamoros es el Sr. José Manuel Bustamante Ramírez La coordinadora cultural del instituto es la Sra. Armandina Escamilla Cisneros quién muy gentilmente proporcionó información sobre la galería.
- 10 Folleto del teatro aporta datos históricos. La actual directora del Teatro Reforma es la Lic. Olga Aide Hinojosa.

11 Al tomar posesión del recinto se encontraron restos de colchones, sábanas, material de laboratorio, etc. de los cuales hubo que desecharse quemando todo en los patios de las instalaciones.

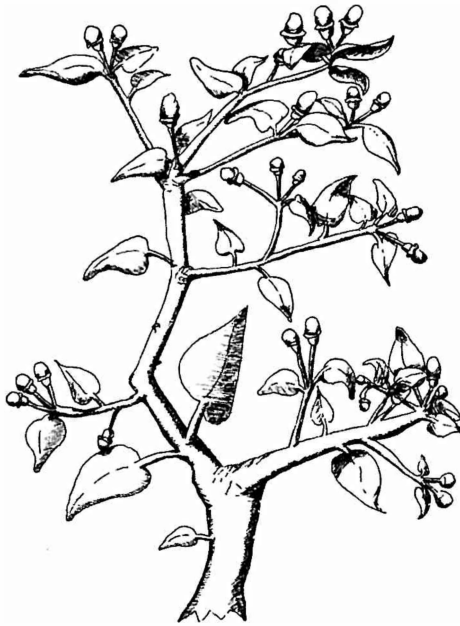
12 La actual directora del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes es la Maestra Leticia Escobedo. En su ausencia, la Sra. Blanca Estela Morales gentilmente aportó datos sobre el instituto.

13 Ahí se encuentran las oficinas de la Sra. Macluf, la Sra. Lic. Hilda Ramírez García, directora del Parque Olímpico, (quien proporcionó los datos de las instalaciones) y la Srita. Morón.

14 El Sr Profr. Ernesto Vallejo Meléndez, Subdirector de Difusión Cultural proporcionó gentilmente información sobre el Colegio de San Juan Siglo XXI.

15 Información obtenida en “Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Tamaulipas” en www.matamoros.com.

BORDER SECURITY ISSUES



**The Last Battle of the Mexican American War:
The United States of America versus
The University of Texas at Brownsville
and Texas Southmost College**

by

Antonio N. Zavaleta

“Borderless Love”

by the Flatlanders

Walking the line between pleasure and pain
Biding my time between loss and gain
I’ve run out of roads, I’ve traveled them all
Down at the border by the one-sided wall

Borderless love, the land of the free
Borderless love, how far can you see?
Borderless love, there’s no border at all
In a borderless love there’s no need for a wall ¹

As the 19th century dawned over the northeastern Mexican hinterlands, Matamoros was a thriving commercial city, an important central place, and hardly a lonely outpost.² This important trade hub, served as one of the two principal import routes for goods coming into Mexico from the eastern United States, Europe and the world beyond.

Within the first twenty years of the life of a person born in Matamoros in 1800, government changed from colonial Spain to Republic of Mexico. Across the river, to the north, in the next twenty years, the Republic of Texas formed, and then it joined the United States. Before that person’s fiftieth birthday, the United States acted on the imperative of manifest destiny by invading

sovereign Mexico through Matamoros. This aggression, which would eventually cost Mexico one-third of her land mass, natural resources, and – most importantly – many hundreds of thousands of its heartiest pioneers.

In 1845, President Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to march southward along the Gulf coast from Corpus Christi, constructing an earthen Fort Texas (remains of which are located on the UTB/TSC golf course), directly across the river from a Matamoros military installation (the *Casa Mata*). His intention was clear, and it was only a matter of time before the cannonade began. While Taylor did not proceed himself to Mexico City, American troops did, leaving behind Fort Texas and the remains of fallen soldiers. This first border outpost along the U.S.-Mexico border would become Fort Brown and serve with honor until after the Second World War, when it was decommissioned. Taylor went on to become President of the United States for his role in the war. The lands surrounding Fort Brown, now a university campus, are the focus of this discussion.

The U.S. aggression played out on the banks of the Rio Bravo in 1845 resulted in one of the most significant international land-grabs in world history. On the border, the powerful shamelessly grabbed land from the less powerful. Today, the border continues to be a locus for land-grabs through other means such as failure to pay taxes, property law suits, and now through federal condemnation.

One hundred and sixty years after the ink had dried on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the push-and-pull forces along this economically disparate border of haves and have-nots has seen tens of millions of Mexicans immigrate to the land of plenty north of the Rio Grande. In later life, they commonly return to their native land for retirement.

In the early 21st century, the United States reeled from its own failed economic policies. The powerful country to the north of the *frontera* feared that continued and unchecked immigration from

the poor country to the south would undermine U.S. economy and socio-political stability. A similar fear during the Great Depression led to a massive deportation and repatriation of Mexicans working in the American Midwest.

In the waning years of the George W. Bush Presidency, in 2006-2009, the United States played out what many writers have described as the most recent battle of the Mexican American War.³ This has been a war of demographics and not of bullets, a war waged by building a border wall along the Rio Grande, in which the United States would ostensibly keep out unwanted Mexican labor and shore up its homeland security. This war has not seen its last battle, as the demographic reality marches on unchecked. Through the force of the federal courts, the powerful once again grabbed land. In doing so, the United States violated the 1846 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which “guaranteed” the rights of the native landowners who have lived along the river peacefully for the last one hundred and sixty years.

This paper will describe the most important events of the years 2006-2009 that affected a little community university, down on the border, its land quietly nestled in the crook of the Santa Cruz Bend of the Rio Grande River at Brownsville. You will read the truth about how one small university, backed by the collective power of persons of both Mexican and American descent, drew a proverbial “line-in-the-sand,” defying the power of the United States federal government. In spite of the rapidly militarizing border in the first decade of the 21st century, UTB/TSC’s resulting victory will be judged to be significant but bitter-sweet. The events in the run-up to the decisions of the federal court in Brownsville focused international attention on Brownsville and the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, and its administration, faculty, staff, and students. It even drew a largely conservative University of Texas System Board of Regents into the fray. The Regents wisely supported their border university with both their vote and their money.

The collective actions served to slow to a crawl the movement of the juggernaut, but the federal government was not to be stopped and the border wall was constructed as planned. More than a century-and-a-half after the war, the shared border at the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande, the governments of the United States and Mexico fail to see the value of strategic socio-economic and symbiotic planning and neighborhood (Amistad-Friendship). The two nations dance around the concept and pay lip-service to it, but fail to act in any meaningful way. There is a sort of avoidance and aversion to the economic equalization of the border. It is painfully obvious that sustained economic development in Mexico would produce a force that would directly reduce migration out of Mexico northward and would result in a reverse migration of Mexicans living in the United States, legally and illegally, back to Mexico. In fact, economic equalization at the border would produce an unprecedented prosperity on the border that frightens both governments.

A right wing and radically conservative Congress (prior to January 2009) convinced itself that a physical infrastructure constructed at the Rio Grande River in Texas would pinch off illegal immigration from Mexico and other countries to the southern border of the United States. In support of this isolationist mentality, Congress passed a law, in 2005, which allowed the Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff unprecedented power to waive "all legal requirements" affecting thirty-six of the most important laws designed to protect American lands and wildlife. Included are: The Endangered Species Act; The Migratory Bird Treaty Act; The National Environmental Policy Act; The Coastal Zone Management Act; The Clean Water Act; The Clean Air Act; and The National Historic Preservation Act. These major and hard-fought-for environmental laws were simply pushed aside in order to avoid lawsuits that would impair or prevent the construction of the so-called border wall.

In April of 2008, after the initial hearing of the government's case against UTB/TSC, Secretary of Homeland Security Chertoff exercised this power. His decision to act was not subject to judicial

review. I believe that historians will find Chertoff's actions to be one of the most-far-ranging abuses of power in American history.⁴

In order to speed up the construction of the fence, the bill sharply limited judicial review to a single District judge; and any appeal from that ruling can only go to the Supreme Court at the Court's discretion. *New York Times* columnist Adam Liptak argued that Congress's voluntary delegation of powers to the executive branch threatened the basic Constitutional principle of separation of powers.⁵

The drama heightened on October 26, 2006, as President George W. Bush signed into law H.R. 6061, The Secure Fence Act, passed by the 109th Congress.⁶ Conventional wisdom on the border believed that, as a Texan, President Bush would not support the construction of a border wall along the Texas-Mexico border. Naively, this belief overlooked the power of the anti-immigration lobby and construction interests. It took many months for the inevitable consequences of the president's signature to enter the consciousness of the average south Texan. And it took almost another year for south Texas landowners and others to become vocal opponents of the border wall. Three years later, in 2006-2009, the "border wall" has become anachronistic and a metaphor for other abuses in the Texas folk-lexicon as seen by *The Flatlanders* song lyrics for *Borderless Love* cited above.

In 2007, the average citizen and elected officials had no idea of what was to come, as south Texans paid little attention to the possibility of a tactical border infrastructure being built in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. It was a remote threat that few took seriously. Many relied on "the government coming to its senses" -- a sentiment aided by editorials such as one by Melanie Mason. In an article in *The New Republic*, Mason pointed out that the "Border Fence Folly doesn't work; it exacerbates the problem; it's inhumane; it's enormously costly; it's environmentally damaging; and it's legally dubious. Mason succinctly outlines everything that is wrong with the border wall."⁷

As the buildup to the wall's construction continued through September of 2007, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published the first detailed maps for the "first-phase" of the border fence to be constructed in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas from Roma to Brownsville. "Word spread like wildfire," said UTB/TSC Vice President Antonio Zavaleta, "It was not until we actually saw the maps that this thing became real beyond real."⁸ "My goodness, do we want the next generation of kids growing up with the mentality of a wall or border [what message does that send?], and the next generation of Mexican kids having that in their psyche as opposed to unity?" Zavaleta reported to *Latina Lista*.⁹

It was realized only later in the public consciousness that the Real ID Act of 2005 pushed all existing laws aside. "Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall have the authority to waive all legal requirements. It will be at the Secretary's sole discretion, and he will determine if it is necessary to ensure expeditious construction of the barriers and roads."¹⁰

In June of 2007 and approximately eight months after the House Resolution became law, the Department of Homeland Security called local landowners and other governmental stakeholders to a meeting at the Harlingen, Texas, Border Patrol Station. For local citizens and elected stakeholders, the period between 2006 and 2007 was a time of uncertainty and confusion about what was actually about to happen. The federal plan seemed to be shrouded in mystery and information confusion. What was supposed to be a simple briefing for city and county officials became an embarrassment that reached the highest offices of Washington, D. C. Following the Harlingen meeting, articles were published in the three local Lower Rio Grande Valley newspapers in Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen, Texas.

The threat loomed that a major portion of the campus of an American university was to be located on the Mexican side of the

wall in an inaccessible and non-functional no-man's land, in the psyche of the folk, and the morning newspapers of the world. The original question posed, innocently and without malice, by Dr. Tony Zavaleta, in Harlingen, Texas, caused the federal officials considerable embarrassment. It was clear that the highest-ranking official in the room had not been fully briefed, had not been physically on the property in question, and therefore did not have any answers. He would have to "get back to us."

The issue of the border wall and the ITECC center remained fairly low key and localized for several weeks. UTB/TSC president Dr. Juliet Garcia was briefed on what had been said, but the university was not yet focused on the issue. In 2007, Dr. Zavaleta was organizationally responsible for the university's International Technology, Education, and Commerce center (ITECC) and, as such, attended the stakeholder's meeting held in Harlingen in 2007. It was at that meeting that the highest-ranking federal officer in the room stated, matter-of-factly, "In the area of Brownsville, the fence will be built on the north side of the levee."¹¹

A simple question that day unleashed the "border-wall-storm" about to engulf south Texas. "What impact would the construction of the border wall have on UTB/TSC property at its ITECC center in downtown Brownsville?" The federals provided no answer, and, ultimately, the college would be drawn into the fray. Decisions made by the college leadership would cause the college to be sued by the federal government (Civil B-08-56).

By the middle of June 2007, Ralph Blumenthal, of the Houston office of the *New York Times*, had taken interest, focusing on the human interest of the story in a June 15, 2007, *New York Times* article, "Some Texans Fear Border Fence Will Sever Routine of Daily Life."¹² *The New York Times* article served to launch a firestorm of look-alike articles, bringing international attention to the issue and heightening the awareness of the average citizen. It also eventually influenced the outcome of the national presidential politics,

with a visit from candidate Obama to the UTB/TSC campus in the waning hours of the election.

Meanwhile, the federal government silently (and without informing the university) rerouted the proposed wall in the area of the ITECC center to the south side of the center, thereby sparing that section of the university from the indignity of the border wall. It was not until UTB/TSC was able to access the federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that it became evident that the government had decided not to pick the fight in the area of the ITECC center. The government had set their sights downriver. Approximately one river mile downriver, the battle would be fought at Fort Texas on the main campus (ironically over the same ground where Major Jacob Brown lost his life in 1845).¹⁵

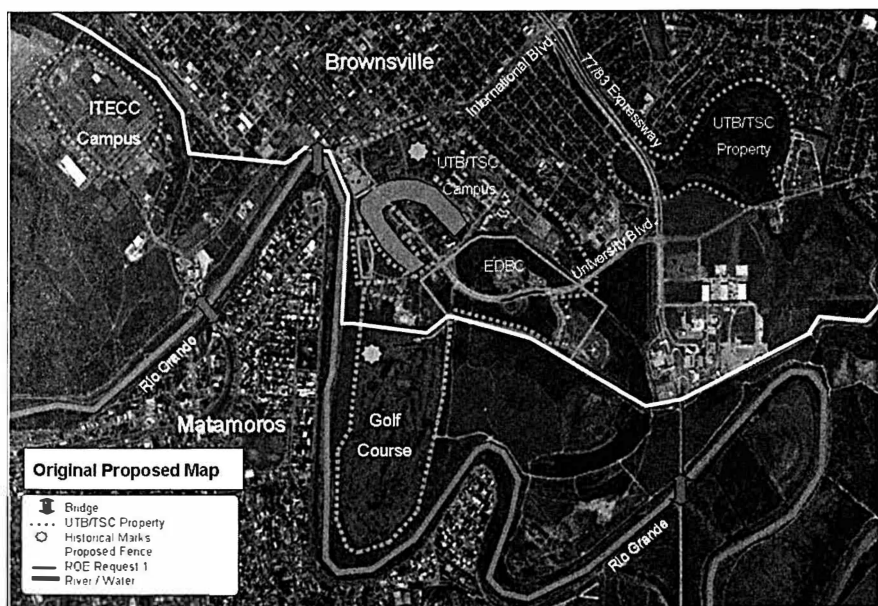
During the summer and into the fall of 2007, the federal government continued a cat-and-mouse game with the local community. The government provided very little information on their plans for the border wall. Many believe there was a campaign of silence and disinformation as 2007 came to a close. So little was said or done by the federal government during those months that a false sense of security and complacency was felt by locals, who believed that the wall would not be built.

Dr. Zavaleta, himself, had inherited a parcel of land located along the river from his father, the late F. E. Zavaleta. The parcel was located along East Avenue in Brownsville, in the impacted area, and so Zavaleta received a request to access his land for the purpose of the initial survey. It was a document identical to that received by the college. As a small and unprotected landowner, Zavaleta felt powerless against the government. There was simply no way to deny access without major and costly legal problems. Since the land in question had no family heritage value (unlike the land of Eloisa Tamez, discussed below) and it seemed that the federal government could not be defeated, access was granted.

Eloisa Tamez, a UTB/TSC faculty member, fought a valiant fight against the government in order to preserve the integrity

of her family land grant on the Military Highway to the west of Brownsville.¹⁴ Tamez' battle with the federal government to maintain her family land continues as of January 2010. Ultimately, in spite of their willingness to sell their land, the Zavaleta family was sued in Federal Court in January of 2010.¹⁵ After a personal conversation with Assistant United States Attorney Daniel David Hu, Dr. Tony Zavaleta filed an answer to the condemnation suit civil no. 1:08-cv-427, on February 2, 2010, indicating that the Zavaleta family did not wish to contest the condemnation.¹⁶

Immediately realizing that the proposed border wall would separate part of the campus of an American university from the accessible continental United States, Dr. Zavaleta asked the officials if what he had heard was accurate. The federal officials seemed to be taken aback by the question and by the fact of the separation. The map below shows the location of the ITECC center in the lower left of the figure with a solid line traced along the north side of the levee. The dashed line traces the IBWC levee. All of the area above the dashed line in the figure is in downtown Brownsville.¹⁷



http://blue.utb.edu/newsandinfo/BorderFence%20Issue/border_fence_informationMap.htm

It was obvious that the senior federal official had not visited the site to which he referred in his presentation nor had he reviewed the proposed construction route to ensure its appropriateness. The spokesperson for Customs and Border Protection could only say, "Nothing has been finalized yet. To say that something will be cut off is way premature."¹⁸

The stakeholder's meeting held at Harlingen pointed out two very important trends that would run the length of the federal civil case against the university, *United States vs. UTB* (Civil B-08-56). The first is that the federal agents on the ground in South Texas either were not being adequately informed by their superiors in Washington or else they were following instructions blindly. Therefore, local and well meaning agents on the ground in South Texas were caught in the cross-fire between their central office in Washington and the national media. Secondly, this fact resulted in what seemed like a pattern of silence and dis/misinformation from the federal government to the local citizens and officials. Some in the know believe that this pattern continues as of this publication.¹⁹

As a result of intense international media coverage, "Zavaleta became a hapless, almost-accidental warrior against the federal government's plan to build a border wall along the U.S. side of the Texas/Mexico divide."²⁰ "I asked the gentleman from Homeland Security if we were going to have to have passports to enter our campus," Zavaleta continued. "How are we supposed to get in there and out? Would they have a hole in the wall and a checkpoint? There are lots of people that go there daily. It's huge." "They're talking about building this wall, but they're not talking about maintaining or repairing it," he said. "The moment it's finished, it's going to deteriorate. People are going to poke holes in it, paint graffiti on it. It's just going to be an eyesore. Are they going to come around and fix it or are they just going to walk away from it and let the citizens here contend with it?"²¹

In the pre-construction border wall period, *New York Times* reporter Ginger Thompson covered Mexican President Vicente Fox's trip through the western United States, and, at every stop, reporters wanted to know how the border wall would affect the relations between the U.S. and Mexico. Human rights experts claimed that the border wall would reduce the number of deaths as immigrants attempted to walk across the border and into the American Southwestern deserts. The data from 2007-2008 seems to indicate a marked reduction in deaths in the deserts of the American Southwest after the wall's completion there. However, it is not completely known if the wall was the causative factor or if fewer Mexican immigrants were attempting the desert crossing due to the failing American economy resulting in fewer job opportunities.

In the pre-wall era, Mexican labor experts involved in Mexican presidential politics claimed that keeping Mexicans at home would force the Mexican government to confront their own need for economic development. Arguably, three years into the Calderón administration the economic situation at the border has worsened. At the time of his election, Mexico was producing approximately one tenth or less, on an annual basis, the number of new jobs needed in the country to maintain domestic production. Felipe Calderón, of the conservative National Action Party (PAN), who would become Mexico's next president, was quoted by Thompson as saying, "The more walls they build, the more walls we will jump."²² In fact, wall-jumping has occurred at the same intensity as economic development in Mexico.

In October 2007, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Department of Homeland Security delivered a "Right-of-Entry for Survey and Site Assessment" request to Dr. Juliet V. García, President of UTB/TSC. The request asked that the "owner" grant to The United States of America a temporary right of entry under the five terms outlined in the document, irrevocable for a period of twelve months from the date of the instrument. The UTB/TSC area to be impacted was described as UTB Property (0-20) Parking Area and

bore the rubric of Renee Smoot, Executive Director of Customs & Border Protection, Office of Finance, Asset Management, Washington, D.C.²³

As a show of solidarity, in 2007, Congressman Ortiz held a very high level “off-the-record” (OTR) unpublicized meeting at Rancho Viejo, Texas. Three powerful Congressmen (not from the Valley, with the exception of Ortiz) were present, as well as Cameron and Hidalgo County leaders, Brownsville and McAllen elected officials, one UTB/TSC leader, other elected officials, and scores of federal agents. During the routine introductions, upon hearing Dr. Zavaleta’s name, the powerful ranking Congressional chairman stated, “Yes, we know who you are,” referring to comments Zavaleta had made in *The New York Times* and to other media about the border wall.²⁴ It was obvious that the Congressmen present that day had been very well briefed by their staff. Zavaleta later remarked that, “it was a little scary to be singled out that way.”²⁵

Meanwhile, The University of Texas’ award winning student newspaper, *The Daily Texan* estimated, in November 2007 that, “By the end of 2008, the U.S. Government may spend \$2.2 billion for the proposed fence to divide Southwestern residents and their Mexican neighbors.”²⁶ This staggering sum seemed incomprehensible, given the extreme poverty and poor economic conditions of south Texas. Elected officials and common citizens alike asked if it would not be wiser to invest that money in jobs and economic development for the border.

UTB/TSC’s refusal of the government’s request was supported by an October 25, 2007, Texas Southmost College “Resolution Urging Alternatives to the U.S.-Mexico Pedestrian Border Fence.” In support of the UTB/TSC administrative position, the TSC Board of Trustees resolved and urged that “The government of the United States pursues alternative solutions to a pedestrian border fence that will not divide our institution and our community.”²⁷

In January of 2008, the student newspaper at The University of Texas at Austin, *The Daily Texan*, reported that....

The federal government requested permission to access UT-Brownsville's campus for the purpose of surveying the planned fence site in October. University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College President Juliet García denied the request, claiming that the fence created security and environmental problems and went against the school's mission of fostering relationships between the communities on both sides of the border.²⁸

The request was refused, and the federal government implied the threat of a law suit in early 2008. In an open letter to the campus community, President Garcia cited five primary reasons for the institution's decision: 1) It would pose a risk to our property investment; 2) It would jeopardize our campus security; 3) It would run contrary to our institutional mission; 4) It would have a negative environmental impact; and 5) It would violate the important historical nature of the campus and other historic sites.²⁹

Once again *The Daily Texan* reported, on January 23, 2008, that, "The University of Texas at Brownsville, along with other landowners in the area, can expect to be sued by the federal government for refusing to allow their property to be surveyed for construction of the border fence." Such a suit was filed two weeks later on February 2, 2008.³⁰ On January 31, 2008, Robert Janson, Acting Executive Director of Asset Management, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, signed a "Declaration of Taking" in the United States District Court Southern District of Texas in Brownsville, Texas. The Declaration of Taking was filed on February 2, 2008, and sought to acquire through the courts 37.52 acres of land controlled by Texas Southmost College.³¹ Attachment "A" of that document states that:

The property [UTB/TSC] is taken under and in accordance with the Act of Congress approved on February 26, 1931,....and the Act of Congress approved October 4, 2006, as Public Law 109-295, Title II, 120 Stat. 1355, which appropriated the funds which shall be used for the taking.³²

Schedule "B" states that "The public purpose for which said property is taken is to conduct surveying, testing, and other investigatory work needed to plan for proposed construction of roads, fencing, vehicle barriers, security lighting, and related structures designed to help secure the United States/Texas border within the State of Texas."³³ The Declaration of Taking contains seven attachments, A through G, including: Authority for the Taking; Public Purpose; Legal Description; Map; Estate Taken; Estimate of Just Compensation (\$100 for 37.5 acres of land); and the Names and Addresses of Purported Owners (Texas Southmost College and its partner Mark G. Yudof, Chancellor of The University of Texas System). The same day, February 2, 2008, The United States of America through its Attorney filed a Complaint in Condemnation, [40 U.S. C. 3114], ostensibly due to the refusal of Texas Southmost College and The University of Texas System to comply with the earlier request for access to the land in question.³⁴

With these Federal lawsuits filed against Texas Southmost College and The University of Texas System, the stage was set for the showdown in Federal Court to take place in Brownsville, Texas, and a hearing was set for March 19, 2008. A national debate was waged over the merits of a physical infrastructure vs. electronic surveillance. *New York Times* reporter Julia Preston reported that, "A top Homeland Security Department official said Thursday that a pilot project to create a virtual fence along parts of the Mexican border [in Arizona] had been a success, but he said that the technology was never intended to be used and would not be used across the entire length of the border."³⁵ The DHS position on the "failure" of the P-28 project was important because, as the court date approached for UTB/TSC, the university's primary defense was based on the fact that electronic surveillance in the area of the university would be much more effective than a border wall.

On March 19, 2008, the United States of America met UTB/TSC in federal court in Brownsville, Texas, to hear the case. At that hearing, Federal Judge Andrew Hanen dismissed the civil suit of Taking and Condemnation against the university and asked that

the two sides meet to resolve their differences. Juliet V. García, president of UTB/TSC stated,

It has been my duty to be a good steward not only of the resources entrusted to me, but also of the values and principles of our democracy. I believe that we have begun to make progress toward a meaningful, consultative conversation to achieve the mutual objectives of the DHS and of the University.³⁶

Eleven points were outlined in the agreement signed by Judge Hanen, which required DHS and the University to work out a deal in an amicable fashion which did not take up the time and resources of the federal court. President García stood on the steps of the federal courthouse and said:

We are pleased that we have an opportunity to participate in meaningful discussions with DHS as we continue to seek a mutually acceptable solution that will allow us to maintain our fundamental mission in higher education.³⁷

UTB/TSC's failure to agree to the right of entry was followed by the Department of the Army Offer to sell real property- RGV-BRP-4000E Project PF225, Tract No. RGV-BRP-4000 and 4000E contain the rubric of Hyla J. Head, Chief Real Estate Division, filed in the Texas Southern District Court on June 19, 2008.

Almost two years after their original article on the border wall, it was reported that "The Congress had allotted an additional one billion dollars for the border wall in 2008 and that the Department of Homeland Security had erected approximately 150 miles so-called pedestrian fencing and that they will add another 225 for a cumulative total of approximately 370 miles of fencing."³⁸ The border wall was now a looming reality in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, its construction moving from west to east down river, with urgency that it be completed before the inauguration of the next American President in January 2009. Homeland Security spokesperson Laura Keehner cavalierly referred to a border wall lawsuit in Eagle Pass federal court, saying "This is just the first of 101

similar lawsuits the justice department planned to file, including 71 in Texas. For those landowners who have not or will not sign, we are moving forward with court cases.”³⁹

As the actual border wall drew near, the topic of the government’s request to access university land for the construction of the border wall was the topic of hours of discussion at the highest levels of the UTB administrative councils. Finally, there was no question that it must be opposed. “In response to not-so-veiled government threats against UT-Brownsville, Dr. Antonio “Tony” Zavaleta, said that “He believes the lawsuits have raised the stakes for UT-Brownsville and that I don’t believe there has been a federal border action of this magnitude since the United States invaded sovereign Mexico (in 1845).”⁴⁰ With this quote, Dr. Zavaleta, a UT Brownsville Vice President, had become the proverbial, “bur-under-the-saddle” of some in Austin. And his soft “censorship” led to a major unintended bifurcation in UTB’s comments and positions vis-à-vis the media. It was suggested to Zavaleta that it would be wise to tone down his comments. Overnight, Zavaleta had become a lightning-rod, and “too hot” to play any meaningful role in the upcoming negotiations with the federals. In fact, after *The Daily Texan* article, Zavaleta was only quoted in the media as an anthropologist and border expert and not as a university official.

From the very start of the protest, south Texans felt that the so-called border wall was an affront to humanity. This may be drawn from a description of the first phase of the border wall as a formidable barrier in The Secure Fence Act: “The Secretary of Homeland Security shall provide for at least two layers of reinforced fencing, the installation of additional physical barriers, roads, lighting, cameras, and sensors” along up to 850 miles of the United States’ southern border.”⁴¹

A second phase of border wall was planned as it was described in the DeMint amendment and remained in play in the U.S. Congress right up until the first week of October 2009, when it

was finally defeated. Finally, in early 2008, the federal government announced that it planned to proceed with the construction of the border wall in the three southernmost Texas border counties: Starr, Hidalgo and Cameron.

The people of the Lower Rio Grande Valley finally coalesced in numerous and sustained peaceful demonstrations and other collective actions protesting the construction of the border wall, but to no avail. The Border Coalition of governments, the Border Alliance, the Border Ambassadors, and many other groups held rallies and protests from Del Rio to Brownsville. Mayors and County Judges began preparing background and briefing materials.⁴² Valley Congressmen Cuellar, Hinojosa, and Ortiz seemed to be sympathetic in their opposition to the border wall, but they were powerless to stop its construction and were cautious in the run-up to the presidential election, not wanting to offend or to have their position effect district federal funding.

In January of 2008, the other shoe dropped for UTB/TSC when it became apparent that the main university campus (located in downtown Brownsville and along the river approximately one river mile south of the ITECC center) was directly threatened by the construction of the border wall and a federal suit. UTB/TSC first received a *Right-of-Entry for Survey and Site Assessment* request from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Homeland Security. While it would have been very easy to comply with this non-binding federal request, the UTB/TSC leadership believed that its educational mission required them – as stewards – to defend the university’s land and to deny access.⁴³

The land below the Gateway International Bridge and along the university’s Fort Brown Golf Course includes a National Historic Site: that of the first “battle” of the Mexican American War. It was just south of the IBWC levee on the golf course where Major Jacob Brown was killed in battle while mounted atop his horse. Major Brown became the city’s namesake. The border wall proposed to “wall off” this historic site, effectively returning land

where American blood was shed in battle to Mexico. This first cannonade at Fort Texas was quickly followed by the historically acknowledged “first” battles of the Mexican American War, at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, both in or near Brownsville, Texas.⁴⁴

The federal request to access university lands for the purpose of survey and construction caused the proverbial “line-in-the-sand” to be drawn, denying the federal government access to university land.⁴⁵ It was the government’s move, and they quickly countered the university’s denial with a condemnation notice filed in U.S. federal court in Brownsville. The debate over the construction of the border wall would not take place with gunfire as it had in 1845, but would be played out by the verbal volleys of attorneys in a federal courthouse.⁴⁶ The federal government filed several other lawsuits against individual landowners in the area, which would also be heard. The cases of the defenseless small landowners, both upriver and downriver from Brownsville, ended rapidly with federal judges either throwing their cases out or by ruling in the government’s favor.

Ironically, on Friday, February 29, 2008, Illinois Senator Barack Obama spoke to religious leaders on the UTB/TSC campus. Obama’s biggest response from the crowd came when he supported the concept of surveillance, patrols, and technology in securing the nation’s borders in lieu of a physical infrastructure:

We are literally just 500 yards from the border and apparently this campus, and I do hope to take a look at it, but it is my understanding that the Department of Homeland Security was intending to place a fence right through the campus. That is foolish. It is an example of not consulting with local and state officials who understand these communities and who can best figure out how to solve the problem.⁴⁷

The sentiment of UTB administrators, the TSC board of trustees, and most other elected officials was thus confirmed by the man who would become the next President of the United States.

After a period of wrangling and preparation, with the government and the college at an impasse, the government's case against UTB was heard in federal court on March 19, 2008. Both sides were prepared, with the government bringing in their top staff of attorneys from Washington, while the Office of General Counsel of the University of Texas System in Austin led the UTB/TSC defense team. Numerous local attorneys lined the walls of the federal courthouse in Brownsville, much like the twelfth man squad at a Texas A&M University football game.⁴⁸ University attorneys laid out a case for the implementation of alternatives to a wall, while the federal government argued that, all alternatives having been considered and dismissed, the wall had to be built pursuant to the law. It was the only option they would consider. The federal government placed the federal law in contention as their principal legal basis while the university attorneys plead for reason, the use of technology and the creation of jobs for the area.

The federal judge set aside a decision asking the two sides to agree to mediate the issue and to come back with a reasonable solution. However, Federal Judge Andrew Hanen did dismiss the government's condemnation suit and ordered the parties to meet in meaningful consultation in looking for an alternative.⁴⁹ Ninety days were given for this alternative-seeking process, and a hearing date was set for June 30, 2008.⁵⁰ The Order of Dismissal signed by Judge Hanen contains ten points:

- 1) The Order is without prejudice to the Defendants' rights;
- 2) The Plaintiff's (U.S. Government) employees and contractors shall have the right to enter upon the property for the purpose of assessing methods of securing operational control of the border through the use of tactical infrastructure (border wall);
- 3) In conducting its studies, Plaintiff will consider Defendants' unique status as an institution of higher education;
- 4) Plaintiff will take all reasonable action to promote safety and minimize any impact on the educational activities thereon;
- 5) Plaintiff is granted access to the property for six months;
- 6) Plaintiff shall give Defendants prior notice of all activities on the property;
- 7) All tools, equip-

ment, and other property taken upon or placed upon the land by Plaintiff shall be removed at the time of expiration of the right of access; 8) Plaintiff will, at its option, either repair damage or make an appropriate settlement for damage; 9) Plaintiff will not clear land without the Defendants' consent and 10) The case is removed from the docket, however the Court retains jurisdiction to resolve interpretations of this Order.⁵¹

The agreement order was significant for several important reasons. While the original request for entry by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) asked for eighteen months of unlimited access into the very heart of the UTB/TSC campus and absolved DHS from any damages that might result from work on the campus, the agreed order limited access to six months inside a much smaller area. This area was restricted to the land adjacent to the levees and required DHS to either repair the damage or make an appropriate settlement.⁵²

The federal court order specified that DHS would not be allowed to clear land or otherwise to alter the physical landscape of the university, and required DHS to give campus police prior notice of all activities on the property and to take all reasonable action to promote safety and to minimize any impact on our educational activities. By entering into the agreement, DHS consented to consider the university's

Unique status as an institution of higher education, to jointly assess alternatives to a physical barrier, and to conduct investigations in order to minimize the impact of any tactical infrastructure on the environment, culture, commerce and quality of life for the communities and residents located near the university.⁵³

The court order was judged to be highly significant; Judge Hanen recommended that DHS consider using the process set out for negotiation as a "template" for dealing with other landowners regarding the border fence. Therefore, UTB/TSC, in good faith, agreed to allow DHS access to the campus under the terms of the agreed order and began collaborating fully with representa-

tives from DHS, Customs and Border Patrol, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

After the agreement was laid out and agreed to, the UTB/TSC negotiating team made continuous and repeated attempts to meet with DHS. Because DHS was non-responsive these attempts were finally deemed to be futile and nonproductive. Texas Southmost College attorney Daniel L. Rentfro Jr. sent an initial letter to Mr. David Pagan (Advisor to the Commissioner and State and Local Liaison, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D. C.) on April 4, 2008, in which he requested that DHS comply with the Judges' ruling and meet with the UTB/TSC negotiating team.⁵⁴

The Rentfro letter was answered on April 15, 2008, by Mr. Pagan, who stated, on the one hand, that, "CBP stands ready to lead efforts to discuss potential alternatives to physical barriers with UTB/TSC," and then, lower in the same paragraph, stated, "CBP cannot engage in endless deliberation on alternative ideas."⁵⁵ It is clear from this statement on April 15, 2008 and from DHS action in the weeks afterward that they had no intention of negotiating or respecting the Federal District Judge's ruling.

Mr. Rentfro answered on April 18, 2008, thanking Mr. Pagan for a visit [presumably in Washington] and he indicated UTB/TSCs intention to set up a meeting with DHS for the week of April 28, 2008. In an insightful statement, Mr. Rentfro stated, "There have been several meetings between representatives of CBP and the University to date. Those meetings essentially (have) been opportunities for DHS to inform the University of DHS's unilateral decision to build a fence through the middle of the University Campus. It is time to move beyond that and to perform the joint assessment contemplated by the court's order."⁵⁶

On May 1, 2008, before his untimely death in an airplane crash over northern Mexico, International Boundary and Water Commissioner, Carlos Marin, informed the DHS that the construction of any physical infrastructure along the floodplain in the

area of Brownsville, Texas, would, according to treaty, require the Republic of Mexico's approval.⁵⁷

In his May 9, 2008 letter to Ms. Erin E. Vespe, U.S. Customs & Border Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C., Mr. Rentfro refers to a letter of May 2, 2008, which is not available to this author at the time of writing, and summarizes an April 29, 2008 meeting between the UTB/TSC negotiating team and DHS. Rentfro states that, "UTB/TSC has been very consistent in its position that a fence along the current proposed alignment is not a satisfactory plan in that it funnels illegal traffic into the heart of the UTB/TSC campus." UTB/TSC's position makes little sense here since the campus has been a major thoroughfare for illegal aliens ever since this author arrived on campus in 1976. It is clear from Rentfro's letter that DHS had placed in discussion (as an option) a so-called "movable" fence, which UTB/TSC rejects since it is not clear who will remove it in a time of emergency such as a hurricane.⁵⁸

The temperature rose, and DHS demonstrated clear frustration with the UTB/TSC negotiators in a May 27, 2008, letter from Erin Vespe to Mr. Rentfro. Ms. Vespe, an agent of DHS, stated,

Your May 9, 2008 letter states that it is the University of Texas at Brownsville's (UTB) position that Congress' mandate to complete construction of the priority miles "is not particularly relevant to the actions taken" at UTB. You further indicated that to the extent UTB did find Congress' mandate relevant, "it imposes an artificial and unreasonable restraint" on the involved parties." This DHS reaction is due to Ms. Vespe's perception of defiance on the part of the UTB/TSC negotiating team and their negative comments both against DHS' intentions and those of Congress. Furthermore her comments refer to UTB/TSC's suggestion that no wall is built at all on the UTB/TSC campus before December 31, 2009 and or the final required miles be built somewhere else. Ms. Vespe states, "I do take issue, however, with your assertion that the removable fence [that the government offered UTB] proposal "fails to meet

the provisions of Judge Hanen's order, which calls for a **joint** assessment of security alternatives (emphasis in original).⁵⁹

In her letter, Ms. Vespe castigated UTB negotiators for dragging their feet, for offering no alternatives, and for suggesting that a taskforce be created to study the matter. At this point, the June hearing in Federal Court before Judge Hanen was right around the corner with little being accomplished:

DHS will not disclose the requested information [for a UTB/TSC hired consultant] nor will it participate in a task force that examines our security or operational requirements. Since April 23, 2008, we have asked UTB/TSC to present alternatives to a physical barrier for DHS's consideration. To date, your clients have not presented any alternative for our assessment, nor have they formally replied to DHS's proposal to utilize a removable fence. UTB/TSC's belated suggestion that we create a task force to consider alternatives, offered more than two months after the Court's order and six weeks after we first solicited input, confirms that, neither UTB nor TSC has any alternative to present for DHS's consideration at this time. Accordingly, DHS will proceed with its plans to construct the border fence in the current proposed location pursuant to our operational requirements.⁶⁰

As if distrust and paranoia is not enough, e-mail records between Dan Rentfro and the government, dating from June 2, 2008, indicate that UTB/TSC sought to voice record the meetings between the two, with the government disallowing.⁶¹

On June 3, 2008, a wild card was thrown into the mix with the arrival of a letter from the Department of the Army to Mr. Renfro, requesting the sale of the UTB/TSC property in question, even though a Federal Court date was looming. "By delivering this letter, the U.S. Government is initiating negotiations to purchase these interests in your client's land. Our offer represents a market derived determination of value."⁶² The Department of the Army offered UTB/TSC \$49,450 for their interest in the land and ostensibly to make the law suit go away.

Contrary to the federal court's agreement, DHS bluntly stated that it was not interested in seeking alternatives to their plans for the construction of the border wall in the area of UTB/TSC in Brownsville, Texas. This DHS position was in direct defiance to the federal judges' request that the two parties work together. UTB/TSC, on the other hand, complied with the court order, investing hundreds of hours, engaging the services of experts to seek alternative mechanisms for providing a secure border and at the same time the safety of our students and university community in general.

In one of the final salvos sent by DHS to Mr. Rentfro before the scheduled June 19, 2008, hearing, DHS representative Erin Vespe, Office of Chief Counsel wrote:

I am writing to follow-up on certain issues raised at our meeting on June 2, 2008 in Brownsville, Texas. At Monday's meeting, the University of Texas (UTB) and Texas Southmost College (TSC) proposed the creation of two task forces: one to study alternatives to a physical barrier, and the second to address ways to minimize the impact of the fence on UTB/TSC's campus.⁶³

UTB/TSC apparently hired consulting firm Modern Technology Solutions, Inc. (MTSI) to examine technological alternatives to the border wall. Mr. Frank Perry of MTSI requested materials of DHS that DHS was unwilling to provide. Weeks passed. Ms. Vespe continues, in her letter to Rentfro,

Since April 23, 2008, we have asked UTB/TSC to present alternatives to a physical barrier for DHS's consideration. To date, your clients (UTB/TSC) have not presented any alternative for our assessment, nor have they formally replied to DHS's proposal to utilize a removable fence. UTB/TSC's belated suggestion that we create a task force to consider alternatives, offered more than two months after the Court's order and six weeks after we first solicited input, confirms that neither UTB nor TSC has any alternative to present for DHS's consideration at this time.⁶⁴

On June 19, 2008, President García issued an open letter to the university community stating:

By entering into the agreement, DHS consented to consider our unique status as an institution of higher education, to jointly assess alternatives to a physical barrier, and to conduct investigations in order to minimize the impact of any tactical infrastructure on the environment, culture, commerce and quality of life for the communities and residents near the university. The Department of Homeland Security has decided to renege on their March 19th agreement to work with us and instead is attempting to force upon us a fence that it knows to be poorly sited. DHS explains this lesser choice as a consequence of needing to satisfy a deadline set in the Secure Fence Act. While it should be demanding the means to offer the best solution, it instead seems willing to rush into a less effective, more expedient one.⁶⁵

In her June 19, 2008 letter, President García indicates that a Motion for Relief has been filed in federal court in reaction to a notice received from the Department of the Army indicating their intention to seize university land. A hearing was set for June 30, 2008 to discuss this issue. Indicating university support of homeland security, García concluded with a sentiment shared by most students, faculty and staff,

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College share the commitment that Congress and our nation have to protecting our homeland. We know that America's security is a national responsibility. However, we also know that what is needed is authentic security, which can only be achieved with it deploys all of our assets, including fully resourced enforcement, a stable economy, trustworthy and open governance, and an educated citizenry. Further, we are duty bound to preserve the safety and security of our students, faculty and staff. We believe in protecting our borders. But we also believe that the rule of law and the principles that guide our democracy must also be protected. These include open and fair government processes and the prop-

erty rights of individuals and state institutions. We deserve to be treated fairly and given the due process afforded by our laws. No more, but certainly not less.⁶⁶

On June 19, 2008, the two sides met once again in Brownsville's Federal District Court. The Defendants' filed a motion for relief under order of dismissal.⁶⁷ The Order of Dismissal filed by UT System Office of General Counsel, Mr. Barry D. Burgdorf, offers the reader the most complete overview of correspondence available between Defendant and Plaintiff between March 19, 2008 and June 19, 2008:

Attached to this Motion as Exhibit B is: a June 6 letter from Erin Vespe, Counsel for U.S. Customs and Border Protection ("CBP"). That letter is remarkably candid in its expression of Plaintiff's disregard for the Court's order.

Among the more telling statements are:

- "[T]he Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) operational and security requirements are solely within DHS's discretion and therefore, are not subject to assessment by a private entity."
- "[W]e have asked UTB/TSC to present alternatives to a physical barrier for DHS's consideration. To date [TSC and UT] have not presented any alternative for our assessment, nor have they formally replied to DHS's proposal to utilize a removable fence."
- "UTB/TSC's ... suggestion that we create a task force to consider alternatives ... confirms that neither UTB nor TSC has any alternative to present for DHS's consideration at this time."
- "Therefore, DHS has concluded that there are no known alternatives to a physical barrier that would provide an adequate level of persistent impedance to secure our border within the time frame mandated by Congress."

- “Accordingly, DHS will proceed with its plans to construct the border fence in the current proposed location pursuant to our operational requirements.”

The above statements demonstrate the failure of Plaintiff to comply with the Court’s order. The following summary of events puts those statements in perspective.

1. March 19, 2008: This Court dismisses Plaintiff’s Complaint in Condemnation, and enters the previously referenced Order of Dismissal, which includes the order that DHS “jointly assess with [UT/TSC] alternatives to a physical barrier.”
2. April 4, 2008: Counsel for TSC writes to David Pagan, State and Local Liaison for the Department of Homeland Security, informing him of members of the UT/TSC working group for the joint assessment, and requesting that DHS identify corresponding persons from DHS.
3. April 15, 2008: Mr. Pagan responds to that letter, states that “CBP stands ready to lead efforts to discuss potential alternatives to physical barriers with UTB/TSC” and proposes a joint meeting on April 23, 2008.
4. April 18, 2008: Counsel for TSC confirms an April 23 conference call, preliminary to an April 28 meeting that would begin the joint assessment of alternate ways of achieving DHS’s security goals.
5. April 29, 2008: Representatives of UT, TSC, DHS, and the International Boundary and Water Commission (“IBWC”) meet. DHS makes no proposals for alternatives to a physical barrier, and proposes instead as its sole alternative the placement of a “temporary” fence on the north side of the levee, while UT/TSC attempted to persuade IBWC to allow a fence around the golf course. UT/TSC notes that the temporary fence as proposed poses the same security problems and ad-

verse impact on the educational mission of UT/TSC as a permanent fence.

6. May 9, 2008: Counsel for TSC again urges DHS to participate in a joint assessment of alternatives to a barrier and informs DHS that UT/TSC is “in the process of assembling a team that will include security consultants, hydrologists, biologists, and archeologists.”
7. May 19, 2008: Counsel for TSC informs DHS via email that TSC has appointed Michael Putegnath project coordinator and that TSC is in the final stages of hiring two subject matter consultants, and requests that DHS disclose what activities DHS has taken in connection with the joint assessment of alternatives to a fence.
8. May 27, 2008: CBP, through counsel, responds to May 9 letter and May 20 email, stating:
 - a. The only assessment of alternatives by DHS was done prior to Court order;
 - b. The only proposal currently in play by DHS is a temporary fence.
9. May 30, 2008: TSC, through counsel, suggests that June 2 meeting be audio-recorded. DHS refuses.
10. June 2, 2008: Parties meet. The meeting begins with Border Patrol Chief Ron Vitiello stating that assessment of alternatives to a fence is a “waste of time.” UT/TSC introduces members of working team to assess alternatives to a physical barrier and to discuss how to minimize impacts on the campus area. The UT/TSC team includes respected experts from Modern Technology Solutions, Inc. (MTSI) a company recognized for systems engineering, testing and evaluation, and operational concept development in the field of homeland defense. In reliance on the Court’s order of March 19, 2008, UT/TSC has entered into a contract with MTSI for the assessment and has

committed funding and resources to the project. DHS refuses to name any corresponding persons, other than its counsel.

11. June 3, 2008: USACOE informs UT/TSC of its intent to acquire TSC real estate, and makes offer to purchase. Offer is not supported by appraisal.
12. June 4, 2008: Frank Perry representative of MTSI, requests information from DHS to further TSC assessment.
13. June 6, 2008: DHS, through its counsel, informs UTB/TSC that it will provide no information in response to the Perry request and reports that it is proceeding with construction of the fence as originally planned without any joint assessment of alternatives. Plaintiff's behavior, culminating in the June 6 letter (Exhibit B), demonstrates basic disregard for the Court's order and authority in this matter, and indeed for the very agreement made by Plaintiff.

Specifically:

- Plaintiff says, "The Department of Homeland Security's operational and security requirements are solely within DHS's discretion and, therefore, are not subject to assessment by a private entity." However, the order, to which DHS agreed, says "Plaintiff, acting through the Department of Homeland Security, will jointly assess with Defendants alternatives to a physical barrier." Defendants agree that they have no power to dictate operational decisions to DHS. However, this Court clearly has the power to order DHS to review those requirements with Defendants. Moreover, Plaintiff has the power to voluntarily do so, as it agreed in the Order of Dismissal. It would appear to be disingenuous to agree to jointly assess alternatives to a physical barrier, and then say that DHS's operational and security requirements are not open to discussion or review.

- Plaintiff says, “We have asked UTB/TSC to present alternatives to a physical barrier for DHS’s consideration. To date [TSC and UT] have not presented any alternative for our assessment, nor have they formally replied to DHS’s proposal to utilize a removable fence.” As much as anything, that sentence indicates Plaintiff’s complete disregard for the Court’s authority in this matter. Instead of working with Defendants to jointly assess alternatives, Plaintiff demands that Defendants present alternatives, presumably to be accepted or rejected in Plaintiff’s sole discretion. The only “alternative” to a physical barrier proposed by Plaintiff is a physical barrier. When Defendants name a working group to move forward with a joint assessment, Plaintiff – virtually by return mail – refuses to name participants in the working group, refuses to provide Defendants’ consultant with any information, and unilaterally terminates the joint assessment before it ever began.
- “UTB/TSC’s belated suggestion that we create a task force to consider alternatives, offered more than two months after the Court’s order and six weeks after we first solicited input, confirms that neither UTB nor TSC has any alternative to present for DHS’s consideration at this time.” That assertion is simply not true. As the correspondence shows, Defendants first informed Plaintiff that they were organizing a working group, and requested participation by Plaintiff, on April 4 2008. Defendants restated that request on May 9 and May 20 2008. The Order of Dismissal does not order Defendants to present alternatives for DHS’s consideration. It orders the parties to jointly assess alternatives. Defendants have attempted to do so and stand ready to move forward. DHS’s assertion, on the other hand, demonstrates its intentional disregard for the Court’s order. Consequently, it is clear that Plaintiff will not comply with the order without Court intervention.
- Plaintiff says, “Therefore, DHS has concluded that there are no known alternatives to a physical barrier that would provide an adequate level or persistent impedance to secure our border

within the time frame mandated by Congress. Accordingly, DHS will proceed with its plans to construct the border fence in the current proposed location pursuant to our operational requirements." Once again, Plaintiff manifests its disregard for the Court's order, by unilaterally terminating the discussions, without even a passing attempt to comply with the Court order that the parties jointly assess alternatives to a physical barrier."⁶⁸

As a companion, Dan Rentfro (representing TSC) filed a similar Order on Defendants' Motion for Relief Under Order of Dismissal.⁶⁹ President García issued an accompanying statement June 19, 2008:

Instead of working under these dictates of the order, they (DHS) chose to move forward with their original plan to construct the fence in the exact same location and manner as previously announced, and to move to seize our land for a token payment. We have been disappointed with DHS's and Customs and Border Patrol's (CPB) lack of cooperation as laid out in the order. We have invested the equivalent of hundreds of hours of hard work by faculty, staff, administrators and volunteers. We have conducted research and gathered information, assisted by some of the best security experts in the country, to seek alternative mechanisms for providing a secure border and safety for our students and university community.⁷⁰

On June 30, 2008, U.S. Federal Judge Andrew Hanen ordered UTB/TSC and DHS to, "Continue jointly assessing alternatives to a border fence as mandated by the previous agreement in March."⁷¹ The openly frustrated Hanen said:

I do think a joint assessment means sitting down with people in the same room with authority and expertise to exchange ideas. I urge both sides to try to work with each other, ultimately benefiting both sides. It seems it cries out for a solution."⁷² UTB/TSC and DHS would be back in court on July 31, 2008. Attempts to work responsibly and transparently, engaging DHS in the joint assess-

ment process were summarily dismissed by DHS. Instead, DHS unilaterally proceeded with its original plans for constructing the border wall how and where they wanted to.⁷³

DHS explained their actions as a consequence of needing to satisfy a deadline set in the Secure Fence Act. While one would think that DHS would demand the best solution in the interest of the community, it instead was willing to defy a federal judge and to rush into a less effective, more expedient decision to “just get the damned thing built on time.”⁷⁴

As ordered by the court, the two parties came together in the United States District Court in Brownsville on June 30, 2008. At this re-hearing, it was immediately obvious that DHS had made no effort to find an alternative in direct defiance of the court order. In an ignoble look of frustration, Judge Hanen gave the federal government thirty days to reach an agreement with the university. He directed his remarks to the government officials present: “I do think a joint assessment means sitting down with people in the same room with authority and expertise to exchange ideas. I urge both sides to try to work with each other, ultimately benefiting both sides. It seems to cry out for a solution.”⁷⁵

In the thirty days after the June 30, 2009, federal court hearing, numerous face-to-face meetings were held, both at the local level and in Washington. The UTB/TSC negotiating team (consisting of President García, Dan Rentfro Jr., Ben Reyna, Michael Putegnath, and Wayne Moore) shuttled back and forth from Brownsville to Washington.

Meanwhile, on the “Hill,” Democratic Congressman Raul Grijalva of Arizona was attempting to have his subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands of the House Natural Resources Committee, introduce and pass the Borderlands Conservation and Security Act. In April of 2008, Representative Grijalva held a subcommittee hearing for his bill at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, attempting to bring attention to the border wall situation in the area. Present at this

historic meeting was Republican Representative Duncan Hunter of California (author of the Secure Fence Act) and Colorado Republican Representative Tom Tancredo (a strong supporter of the border fence). Chairman Grijalva's support for a border without a border wall may be summed up by his words, "The administration is an animal unto itself. If you are not for waiving thirty-six laws, building a fence, and putting the safety of the nation above a species, then you are obviously pro-terrorist, open borders, and don't care about the security of our nation."⁷⁶

On July 31, 2008, representatives of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and of the University of Texas at Brownsville and of the UT System once again met at the federal courthouse in Brownsville, indicating to Judge Hanen that they had reached an agreement which would end all further court proceedings between the parties. *UTB/TSC News reported*, "UTB/TSC and DHS reached an agreement today (July 31, 2008) that ends all court proceedings between the parties. DHS/CPB has agreed to end condemnation actions against UTB/TSC, effectively allowing UTB/TSC to retain ownership over all of its property."⁷⁷ "As part of the agreement, UTB/TSC would enhance campus security in two ways. University-owned fencing adjacent to the levee would be augmented to a height of 10 feet and upgraded with high-tech devices. The current institutional fence varied between six feet and eight feet. The enhancements to UTB/TSC's perimeter security, which would come at the university's expense, would complement methods already in use on the campus." In a statement of faith, President García said, "This agreement demonstrates the hard work and good faith that were brought forth when the parties finally sat down at the table and talked about what solution would best serve the mutual interests."⁷⁸

On August 5, 2008, the formal agreement between UTB/TSC and DHS was filed in U.S. District Court in Brownsville, Texas. The agreement (which contains twenty-seven points) is signed by UTB/TSC President Juliet V. García, Interim Chancellor of the UT System Kenneth I. Shine, Vice Chancellor and General Counsel

Barry D. Burgdorf, and David V. Aguilar, Chief, United States Border Patrol for the government. Of major significance is point number 3, which states that, "UTB/TSC will, at its own expense, improve and/or install a pedestrian fencing system by December 31, 2008 along the alignment represented in the agreement."⁷⁹

UTB/TSC border wall pre-construction meetings began, and on August 14, 2008, at a regular meeting of the University Of Texas Board Of Regents in Austin, the Regents commended UTB/TSC for its position and stance on the border wall, and then agreed to appropriate money for the required upgrade of the current fence to meet the federal requirements. As a result of the agreement and of generous grant from the UT-System, UTB/TSC was able to upgrade approximately one mile of existing institutional fence at a cost of \$1million. The fence upgrade was completed in a timely fashion under the leadership of Dr. Wayne Moore and is indistinguishable from any regular university or institutional fence.⁸⁰

At the University of Texas, Board of Regents meeting Regent Caven commented:

I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the many individuals who worked so diligently to find a compromise outcome that would satisfy the responsibilities of both UTB/TSC and the US Department of Homeland Security related to the construction of the proposed border fence (at UTB/TSC in Brownsville, Texas).⁸¹

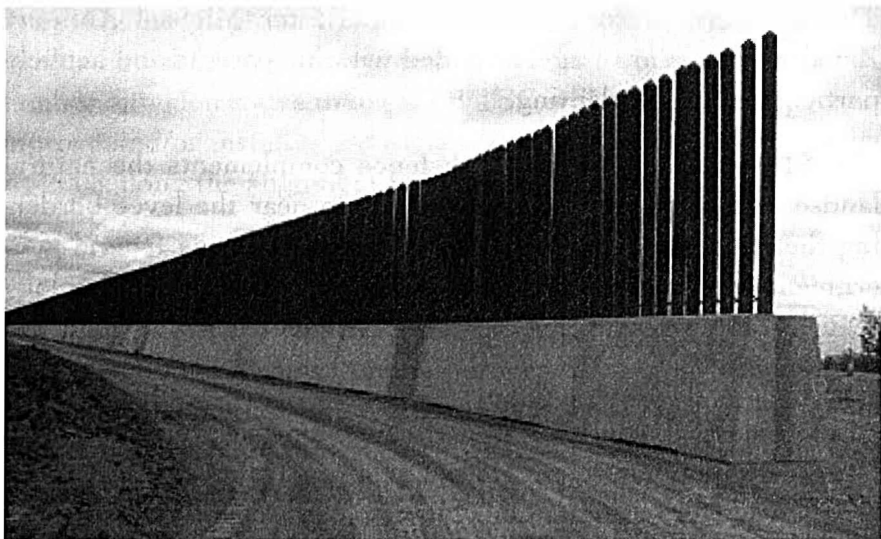
The bid for the construction of the upgrade at UTB/TSC was eventually awarded to Thrall, a Texas-based construction company, for \$1.04 million.⁸² Finally, the border wall at UTBTSC became an "enhancement" of an already existing institutional structure. Shortly after the completion of the "enhancement," in February 2009, the university celebrated its "victory" with a public event at the border wall by planting several hundred climbing jasmines along the north, university side of the fence. True to form, the federal government made its displeasure known and questioned the university's right to undermine the wall by planting flowers.⁸³

Three hundred volunteers including Master Michael Anthony Zavaleta, one year of age, attended with his parents and actively participated in the planting.⁸⁴

The \$1.04 million, 10-foot high fence complements the natural landscape on the campus' southern edge near the levee bordering the Rio Grande River. The agreement with the federal government which also required UTB/TSC to invest in technology security equipment will eventually be covered with vines and wildflowers.⁸⁵

At the time of this writing, in early 2010, one section of the UTB fence – at the point where UTB/TSC property meets GSA property – was still in contention. How to connect the two styles of fence, a gate, and electronic spy gear is still a point of contention.

The federal government eventually sued all of the small landowners in Cameron County who defied their access request and who lacked power and resources to defend themselves. Negotiations continued with the City of Brownsville for the construction of the border wall in the area of downtown Brownsville. On June 21, 2009, the *No Border Wall Blog* reported that the Brownsville City Commission gave in to DHS' demand that the city give away city property to build the border wall. On two previous occasions, it was reported that the city made attempts to do this and met with widespread opposition from Brownsville citizens. The Brownsville City Commission committed itself to building the border wall in the area of downtown Brownsville at the city's expense due to their intention to control design features consistent with plans to develop a river walk and arts district. The city agreed to give up 15 acres of land the DHS valued at \$123,000.



“Floating fence” border wall design on top of the flood control
Levee in Cameron County, Texas⁸⁶

In return, DHS planned to build a so-called “floating fence” (pictured above), which can be dismantled in time of emergency. It is not known who will dismantle it, at what cost, or who will pay for it in future emergencies. In downtown Brownsville, the border wall will most likely be built on the flood plain, and therefore be completely submerged when a major hurricane makes landfall in Brownsville. DHS claims that the so-called floating fence cost will be between \$12 to \$16 million dollars per mile, as constructed in Hidalgo County (at 2009 dollar values).

Finally, a last minute surprise provision in the City of Brownsville’s contract with DHS specifies that, if the local border wall built by DHS is ever replaced by a city wall consistent with tourism, its construction expense will be borne by the citizens at the cost of from \$20 to \$30 million dollars (estimated in 2009 dollar values). It is unlikely that the City of Brownsville would ever have the money to complete such a project, so that the wall to be built by the federal government will likely be there forever.⁸⁷ Additionally, in late 2009, a lawsuit was filed in federal court by Harlingen land developer Rollins Kopple, claiming damages by the border wall

in the area of his development, the site of the “Amigoland” area of Brownsville between the IBWC levee and the City of Brownsville levee located on the river.

Afterword

More than thirty years ago, as a doctoral student at The University of Texas at Austin, I was dissuaded from studying the U.S.-Mexico border because it was considered irrelevant and not supportive of a career in anthropology. Fortunately, I did not follow that admonishment, as the U.S.-Mexico border has been a topic of great intensity for the entirety of my professional career.⁸⁸ Over the course of my forty years of studying the border, the proposal to spend billions of dollars on a wall separating our populations and peoples as a “so called” solution to illegal immigration and homeland security is just the most recent example of decades of border neglect, abuse, and ridiculous ideas.

For the past 150 years, the border has been irredentist, that is, occupied by a subjected majority, and ruled by a dominant minority. Because of this imbalance, policy and attitude toward the border and the people of the border has led most recently to this atrocity called a border wall. In many ways, the U.S.-Mexico border is a paradox, an enigma, which makes little sense to the casual observer.

The construction of a border wall in name of homeland security or of curbing illegal immigration is simply the most recent episode in a history of failed efforts to divide two great countries and peoples, instead of enacting sound economic and social policies to unite them.⁸⁹ Homeland Security is a serious issue that won't go away. What can UTB/TSC do as an institution of higher education? UTB/TSC has proposed the creation of a Texas Center for Border and Transnational Studies (TCBTS) that would promote the ongoing study of the border.⁹⁰ Strategically located at the south-eastern-most end of the U.S.-Mexico border at the Gulf of Mexico, the Texas Center for Border and Transnational Studies would address critical cross-border teaching and learning

needs and assist in the facilitation of cross-border policy decisions through the creation and support of a cross-border regional planning component. It would operate in an interdisciplinary fashion that welcomes participation from all internal colleges and schools, students, faculty and staff, as well as collaboration with cross-border institutions for the purpose of convening, and conducting applied research intended to assist in informed decision making on the status and condition of the cross-border region.⁹¹

The establishment of the Texas Center is critical given the need for research on pressing border issues which will inform policy decisions directed at improving quality of life in the cross-border region. The Texas Border Center at UTB/TSC would serve as the collaborative anchor at the lower or eastern end of the U.S.-Mexico Border. The type and scope of research envisioned here is not currently being conducted by an institution of higher education on the lower border and only rarely on the border in general. The Texas Center looks forward to the development of a new paradigm for Border Studies, based on applied research intended to assist in the solution of social and economic problems.

Additionally, discussions with public safety, health and emergency management leadership in our border region support the need for integrative training programs. The Texas Center would focus on training and integration of multi-jurisdictional public safety personnel in technical, operational and comprehensive public safety strategies critical in meeting national homeland security and emergency management objectives of our cross-border region and nations. Public safety agencies working along the United States-Mexico border face complex and unique challenges in addressing national homeland security concerns and in adopting federally mandated objectives.⁹²

Local, county, state and university law-enforcement agencies along the border must integrate their policing strategies in a multi-jurisdictional border with an overwhelming federal law enforcement presence. Moreover, the exercise of policing strategies must

be carefully balanced between national security and open bilateral trade, tourism and immigration policies. Maintaining a harmonious bi-national environment in a border saturated with the full-spectrum of public safety agencies demands an approach that minimizes the bureaucratic, complex and fragmented operational methods that unintentionally occur in such environments.

Currently there is no institute that integrates comprehensive strategies in addressing the training and operational objectives of a multi-jurisdictional, cross-discipline, multi-hazard, secure border initiative. The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College is geographically positioned on the border and gulf coast environments to appropriately address homeland, border and port security training and integrate multi-jurisdictional strategies.⁹³ Most importantly a Center for border studies including homeland security training would provide our students with added opportunities for employment and career.⁹⁴

In early October 2009 a major gun battle between the Mexican Army and narco-terrorists along Matamoros' Tamaulipas Boulevard (which runs along the Rio Grande River) resulted in high-caliber bullets crossing the river and onto the University of Texas at Brownsville campus. Although no one was injured, the large caliber bullets broke out the back window of a student vehicle parked in a university parking lot, and at least one bullet entered the university recreation center where students were attending classes and exercising. The border wall did nothing to stop this form of violence from reaching the United States.⁹⁵

"At times society has to come together to protest against things that are thrust upon you and I believe this is one of those times. All sectors of the community are coming together. I hope it's not too late," Zavaleta said.⁹⁶ In fact it is not too late. In October 2009, Border Ambassador, Inc. President Jay Johnson-Castro, tireless opponent of the border wall and proponent of the border, reported that H.R. 2892 had been passed by the US Senate, and that the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2010

had voted to de-fund any additional money for the construction of the border wall.⁹⁷ In January 2010, Border Ambassadors, Inc. held its inaugural meeting in Del Rio, Texas, and Villa Acuna, Coahuila.⁹⁸

The struggle against DHS and the Border Wall continues as localized and historically significant, if not failed, skirmishes. DHS proposes to destroy the integrity of the Paso Del Indio nature train on the Laredo Community College campus in Laredo, Texas. In a courageous act of solidarity on Thursday, January 28, 2010, The Laredo CC Board of Trustees voted to deny the Federal Government access to their land, just as Texas Southmost College Trustees had done two years earlier.⁹⁹ Now we have only to wait for the border wall to crumble into the earth and become a mere line of rust to be excavated by the archaeologists of the future.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

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A Critique of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Border Wall in the Rio Grande Valley

by

Terence M. Garrett

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to be influenced by external forces within the American government. In particular, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress' oversight bureau, has been instrumental in promoting private sector business values on government agencies, in particular the DHS. The monumental tasks given to the DHS by political operatives in the aftermath of two historic crises – the al Qaeda attack on September 11, 2001 and failure of adequate response before and after Hurricane Katrina in late August 2005 – have led to calls for reform and increased performance in the wake of the latest disaster. The border fence, or wall, is the latest attempt to prove the workability of the organization.

This article offers a theoretical model based on the philosophy of phenomenology for conceptualizing management success and failure by the DHS, GAO, and government service providers. A case study analysis of the Border Fence initiative by the DHS and its law enforcement agencies and the impact on the Rio Grande Valley in Texas will be undertaken by the author to provide new insights for effective public administration and policy.

Introduction

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been in transition and transformation since its inception in 2003. The DHS was created primarily as a direct result of the events surrounding September 11, 2001, or "9-11" (as it is understood by the

American public). Hurricane Katrina also had the effect of causing the DHS to re-assess its mission because of that calamity in 2005. The “National Strategy for Homeland Security, October 2007” reads thusly:

The National Strategy for Homeland Security guides, organizes, and unifies our Nation’s homeland security efforts. Homeland security is a responsibility shared across our entire Nation, and the Strategy provides a common framework for the following four goals:

- Prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks;
- Protect the American people, our critical infrastructure, and key resources;
- Respond to and recover from incidents that do occur; and
- Continue to strengthen the foundation to ensure our long-term success.

This updated Strategy, which builds directly from the first National Strategy for Homeland Security issued in July 2002, reflects our increased understanding of the terrorist threats confronting the United States today, incorporates lessons learned from exercises and real-world catastrophes – including Hurricane Katrina – and proposes new initiatives and approaches that will enable the Nation to achieve our homeland security objectives.¹

The DHS officially defines homeland security as “a concerted national effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur.”² As such, the DHS maintains that the terrorist attacks of 9-11 were acts of war against the U.S. and that the nation was at risk prior to 9-11 – vulnerable – yet the new DHS is designed to protect against terrorist

threats, evolving yet again to protect the American public from natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. First and foremost, the war on terror takes center stage due to the implications of 9-11.

In addition to the perceived external threats to the security of the U.S., the DHS since its creation has been confronted with many obstacles in terms of its organizational efforts. Firstly, according to the GAO, the massive reorganization and transformation of over 170,000 federal employees from 22 agencies presented serious challenges for homeland security, rating the efforts of the DHS as "high risk."³ Secondly, Hurricane Katrina exposed deficiencies in the organization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that caused a reassessment of DHS assets and mission after the occurrence in 2005. Thirdly, there is considerable opposition to the department's management efforts to change the pay structure, employee grievance system, and the ability of unions to represent federal workers.⁴ And finally, there has been some measure of resistance by citizens and citizen groups to DHS initiatives. The latter is the subject of a portion of this paper with regard to the proposed border fence project by the DHS.

Theoretical Perspectives

The aspects of public policies dealt with here regarding the DHS and its involvement in the construction of the border fence and increased security practices that affect the people of the Rio Grande Valley that I will be addressing include: (1) everyday working reality in conflict with those in power who profess the know-how of protecting the American public using essentially statistics and data to bolster their claims; (2) an assessment of the social construction of reality as exhibited by the citizens, elected officials, and bureaucrats involved in the case study; and, (3) a critique of the images and language used by the people involved in the case study will shed light on the overall case study. With these policy aspects under examination I will employ phenomenological theory using the work of Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz, and Ralph Hummel, along with that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.

The design of the analysis will be focused on making a contribution to the advancement of public administration theory using the case study method and understanding the policy implications for those affected in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Why is there a discrepancy between the promoters of public service and those who receive such services? How can it be that there would be differences in the realities of government and its citizens? I will begin attempting to answer those dilemmas by examining philosophers who have undertaken in-depth analyses of meaning within individuals.⁵ The discussion leads to the pre-eminent scholars of being: the phenomenologists. Instructive here is the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, where arithmetic knowledge – knowing the world in numbers – is compared to everyday knowledge – knowing the world based on actual experience.⁶ It is the large *numbers* of illegal immigrants with which policy makers in the DHS are primarily concerned. It is the potential *number of terrorists* crossing the border into the United States with which policy makers in the upper echelons of the DHS are supremely concerned.⁷ Using phenomenological theory developed here for analysis, we find the preoccupation with the public policies of illegal immigration and an attack on the homeland leads executives in the DHS to design the building of a border wall/fence that alienates constituents living nearby who are directly affected by its consequences. The DHS Secretary is distant from real life in the Rio Grande Valley in terms of time and space, living in Washington, D.C. – as at the time of the development of public policies affecting the area – primarily the 2006 Secure Fence Act which gave him powers over environmental laws and private land holdings in the name of national security. He will make statements to the effect of the perceived need for increased security in the context of better identification procedures at the border such as ...

It's time to *grow up* and recognize that if we're serious about this threat, we've got to take reasonable, measured but nevertheless determined steps to getting better security. [The secretary

also states] I can guarantee if we don't make this change, eventually there will come a time when someone will come across the border exploiting the vulnerabilities in the system and some *bad stuff will happen*. And then there'll be *another 9/11 commission* and we'll have people come saying "Why didn't we do this?"⁸

With these statements, 9-11 has been invoked as a means to persuade the audience over to the received position of Secretary Michael Chertoff. How could anyone interested in *homeland* security possibly oppose his position? The increased procedures of a new national identification card and a border fence are advertised to mean that the American public will be safer.

Hummel submits that bureaucracy replaces thinking and ends thought. "Thought" is necessary for human beings to behave in a truly political manner. At the point where bureaucracy takes over, politics ends. Bureaucracy truncates politics through language and moves away from real life. Hummel summarizes the distance between bureaucracy and real life:

1. *Bureaucracy models reality*. Its original modeling of reality becomes the standard for recognizing reality as something that is real *to* the model.
2. *Bureaucracy, in time, becomes preoccupied with procedure*. This dedication of its functionaries is entirely natural in view of human being's' tendency to immerse themselves in the infinite variety of technical problems that a technical approach opens up. But its focus on means rather than ends leads to a lack of concern with functionaries' own origin in real-life problems, for the solving of which the model was originally formed, and also the impact of the solutions.

As does technique in science, so does procedure in

bureaucracy overshadow problem statement (policy intent) and solution (program outcome). Technique in science or logical procedure in modern organization truly is the art of achieving precisely what we want without due care for the human consequences.⁹

The phenomenological model of bureaucratic reality has profound policy implications for the people of the Rio Grande Valley in dealing with the DHS. Ostensibly congruent concerns over the important issues of border security – the border fence (wall) and citizen identification – get to the point where disagreements will have difficulty in being overcome.

The social construction of reality becomes treated as objective. Such objectivity obscures the fact that reality is “made by men – and, therefore, can be re-made by them.”¹⁰ And, “the reified world is, by definition a dehumanized world. It is experienced by man as a strange facticity, an *opus alienum* over which he has no control rather than as the *opus proprium* of his own productive activity.”¹¹ Contradictory experiences may or may not have “coherence (*Einstimmigkeit*)”¹² with one another. By this we mean (a) their mutual conditioning of one another, (b) their synthetic construction into higher-level patterns, and finally (c) the meaning-configuration of these patterns themselves, namely, the ‘total configuration of our experience in the actual Here and Now.’”¹³ Experiences translated to a change in language with new meaning. Thus, “illegals,” “illegal immigrants,” or “illegal aliens” become the buzzwords for people who have come to the U.S. seeking economic opportunity, but who, since 9-11, have become viewed as being socially embedded with terrorists. Unwittingly or not, the transition and transformation of people who formerly were undocumented workers have now been bureaucratically morphed into “illegals” and lumped into the same category as “terrorists.” Thus, the problem of using objectivity to dehumanize people also lays the groundwork for legitimately keeping them out of our borders at any cost and without regard for the social, political and eco-

conomic consequences for innocents who happen to be unfortunate enough to reside along the Rio Grande River.

Beyond the manufactured terrorist threat, opponents of the wall cite problems with the destruction of the environment, reduction of trade with communities and people across the border, the disruption of ties with friends and families in border communities, and the outright ugliness of the sizeable construct. The intentions behind the border “fence” or “wall” drive the fears of the people from various perspectives. Finally, the question remains as to whether it matters whether the “fence” or “wall” is ever built and whether it will help its advocates on either side of the issue with their fears. There is also the possibility that opponents of the fence could use the issue to obtain concessions from the DHS and the federal government – *à la* construction of adequate levees to prevent a devastating flood caused similarly by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

The DHS proposes the “fence” as a means to bring about an end to terrorism – at least through the border with Mexico – and an end to illegal immigration – from a bureaucratic policy ideal, primarily from senior executive government officials who do not dwell along the US-Mexican border. American citizens living in the Rio Grande Valley – that are affected by the border “wall” – see the possibility of a hideous structure ruining the aesthetical value of the area, destroying long-cherished personal and friendly relations with their neighbors in Mexico, and the potential destruction of the ecological system important for quality of life and eco-tourism. The fable of the neighborly “fence” foisted upon the residents of the Rio Grande Valley has become the “wall” designed to cut off families, culture, and history of good will between friends on both sides of the river. There is no hope of a reprieve, given the current political climate of 9-11.

Since the border “wall” is now seemingly a *fait accompli*, people and their local government representatives have sought to make the most out of an untenable situation. The question remains as

to whether those dwelling in the Rio Grande Valley will be living in a potential *dystopia*¹⁴ – if violence and chaos ensues from the construction of the border wall.

Background of DHS Transition and the Inspector General and GAO Assessments

The tragic events of 9-11 gave rise to the idea of preparing the U.S. to ward off terrorist attacks better. “9-11” has become the *hyperreal* reality that has gripped Congress, the President, and other leaders in government to institute broad, sweeping changes.¹⁵ Relatively shortly after the attack and subsequent creation of DHS, the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina had policy makers once again scrambling to take new initiatives to better control events that transpire in the area of natural disasters – and not just terrorist attacks. The DHS, as the lead federal governmental agency charged with protecting the homeland, has responded after each incident with new plans or “frameworks” to shore up alleged deficiencies in the previous national security models. With the latest documents now available to emergency responder personnel at all levels of governments, the DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have effectively re-tooled their collective kits in order to facilitate a better overall response – defined primarily as efficient and effective along the lines of the language of business.¹⁶

Criticism from the Inspector General’s office has been leveled at the DHS leadership for failures resulting from the Hurricane Katrina debacle. Specifically, the Inspector General has cited the agency for the following actions:

The major management challenges we identified are:

- Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery
- Acquisition Management
- Grants Management
- Financial Management
- Information Technology Management
- Infrastructure Protection

- Border Security
- Transportation Security
- Trade Operations and Security

The Inspector General (IG) cited DHS, and most particularly FEMA, for lack of “good business practices” and for extensive fraud, waste, and abuse in the acquisition management process.¹⁷ All of the aforementioned deficiencies are examples of increased pressure on the DHS, which has led the agency to take drastic and decisive action. It is the action being taken in the area of “Border Security” with regard to the Rio Grande Valley that is central to this analysis.

On October 30, 2007, at a meeting of the Mexican-American Legislative Caucus on Border Security at the University of Texas at Brownsville, one of the presentations was given by Boeing SBInet – a company created within the Boeing Corporation – to pitch their “pilot project” near Nogales, Arizona. The project consisted of 28 miles of “fence” and electronic surveillance equipment designed to prevent illegal migration into the area. SBInet provided a power point presentation of major aspects of their program, based largely on a combination of high-tech equipment and an actual physical fence for part of the border “protection.” The organization had also provided a “get acquainted” function the previous evening – inviting Texas state legislators, staffers, and dignitaries of the greater Brownsville community and Cameron County.¹⁸ The political pressure placed upon the DHS by the vendor was recognized by the IG as recounted here:

Our main concern about SBInet is that DHS is embarking on this multi-billion dollar acquisition project without having laid the foundation to effectively oversee and assess contractor performance and effectively control cost and schedule. DHS did not properly define, validate, and stabilize operational requirements and needs to do so quickly to avoid rework of the contractor’s systems engineer-

ing and the attendant waste of resources and delay in implementation. Moreover, until the operational and contract requirements are firm, effective performance management and cost and schedule control is precluded. DHS also needs to move quickly to establish the organizational capacity to properly oversee, manage, and execute the program. In our March 2006 semiannual report, we reported progress in building that capacity and we continue to monitor this program and the new acquisition organizations closely.¹⁹

In any event, DHS has pursued the border fence project – whether corporations such as Boeing SBI net obtain some, most, or all of a portion of the border security initiative. Texas state lawmakers are not immune from their efforts. The IG report seems to have some problems with the vendor’s project, insofar as the accountability issue is concerned. Yet the incentive for Boeing SBI net and other “fence” manufacturers is powerful enough to continue to press its claims within the DHS and its allies.

The Wall (Fence?) and the Rio Grande Valley

The DHS’ efforts to construct an eighteen-foot-high fence (or “wall,” as claimed by its detractors) in the Rio Grande Valley have met with much local resistance from interest groups, government officials from all levels of government, and individual citizens. While the salience of the issue seems unclear for most of the rest of the country in terms of building the fence,²⁰ the intensity of opposition from people directly affected has been fierce. By the end of 2008, the Bush administration – through the actions of the DHS – is proposing that 18,300 CBP agents be on the border, with an additional 1,700 more by the end of 2009, along with 370 miles of fencing in addition to vehicle barriers, camera and radar towers.²¹ The border fence is a symbolic barrier ostensibly designed to keep terrorists and illegal aliens out of the United States.

While a comprehensive survey of Rio Grande Valley residents has not been conducted as to the salience and efficacy of the border issue, individuals, citizens groups, administrators from state and local levels of government, and political leaders have become involved in questioning the need for the fence. The DHS has conducted a comprehensive draft on the impact for the environment for the Rio Grande Valley Sector region in preparation for the new border fence for up to seventy miles of "tactical infrastructure," i.e. "including pedestrian fencing, patrol roads, and access roads along the U.S./Mexico international border in southernmost portions of Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron counties, Texas."²² This means the DHS needs to gain access to private and public properties – portions of the document have been called into question.²³ In November and December 2007, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers began a process of obtaining permission to survey citizen's land. Some landowners resisted the government's request. Tracts of land have been held by various families since the land grants given to them by the King of Spain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. "I will protect this land just like my ancestors did," said Eloisa Tamez,²⁴ adding, "Who do they think we are down here? Somebody sitting under a cactus with a sombrero taking a nap?"²⁵ – when asked by CBP to sign over access of her land which had been in her family's hands since 1747. Her story is but one of several being told concerning the problems of federal government access to her ancestral lands.

Secretary Chertoff on Friday, December 7, 2007, announced that "landowners along the U.S.-Mexico border have 30 days to consent to the demands of federal surveyors or they will be taken to court."²⁶ The federal government offered one hundred dollars for up to six months access to the affected properties – with virtually unlimited rights to remove obstacles on the property in order to conduct the surveys. Attorneys for plaintiffs against the DHS action have been in U.S. Federal District Courts in order to halt government action or attempt to gain adequate remuneration for the access rights (Perez-Trevino 2008).²⁷ The DHS followed

through on its threat to sue for access of private lands. Federal Judge Andrew S. Hanen has asked for “reasonableness” to prevail, urging “both sides to use ‘common sense’ and ‘good neighborism.’” In addition, he “seemed concerned that the government should provide sufficient notice to landowners, avoid disrupting landowners’ operations, minimize damages, if any, and use present accesses and the levee system, “in the spirit to get along with property owners.”²⁸ Subsequent court rulings have not been favorable to most of the people of the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Political leaders in *El Valle* have voiced concerns about the impending border fence. McAllen, Texas, Mayor Richard Cortez, leader of the Texas Border Coalition, says that, rather than build the fence, the federal government ought to “deepen the river, clear the land for better surveillance, and create a legal Mexican worker program.” He added ...

Who doesn't want security? Our fight with the government is not over their goals, it's how they go about them.... You can go over, under and around a fence and it can't make an apprehension.²⁹

The original draft of the border fence actually shows the fence line being drawn directly through people's homes. Access to water for farm animals and crops has been another issue affecting citizens in the Valley. There is also the potential problem of extensive environmental damage to endangered ocelots, jaguarondi, and other animals whose habits will be destroyed and who will be denied access to water by the proposed border fence. Finally, DHS Secretary Chertoff has been given legal authority to waive environmental regulations in other states and will do so, if necessary, in the Rio Grande Valley.⁵⁰

In October of 2007, county leaders from the Rio Grande Valley met with members of Texas' congressional delegation to discuss the possibility of bringing an upgrade to the levees that protect the area from flooding as a result of tropical storms and hurricanes. Flood control improvements include raising portions of the 180-

mile levee system up to eighteen feet high – in addition to the fence that will be co-located with it.³¹ The general idea was to make lemonade out of lemons: if the feds insist on building a border fence, then the affected areas should at least benefit by being protected against a more likely threat to the region than terrorism:³² hurricane winds and a flood surge. There may be some success with this strategy, though the question still remains. As of January 24, 2008, the Customs and Border Patrol announced that the border fence, along with the levee repairs, is a plan that is a “workable, feasible solution... We’re optimistic that this will work out” with a final decision pending in the next few weeks.³³

The proposed fence also has a direct impact on The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC). Portions of university property – the university golf course and technical training center, along with other segments – are scheduled to be placed on the “Mexican” side of the fence. Part of the CBP proposal includes leaving a gap in the fence on the golf course in order to funnel *illegals* attempting to gain admission into the U.S. – potentially capturing them while university students and guests are trying to play a round of eighteen holes during the day. The University of Texas at Brownsville President, Dr. Juliet Garcia, has refused to sign the paperwork giving the Army Corp of Engineers and the Customs and Border Protection permission to survey university property, which belongs to the people of the state of Texas and Cameron County. She has recently received the support of The University of Texas System and the Texas Southmost College Board of Regents, thus involving – potentially in legal matters – by implication the state of Texas on the side of UTB/TSC against the feds. The UTB/TSC President has maintained the position that the fence is an affront to the mission of the university, endangering the good relations with neighbors in the region, adversely affecting the culture of the area, destructive of the environment and university property, and posing a danger to the safety and well-being of students, faculty and staff at the university. The university and its citizens believe in protecting the

border and good immigration policy, but feel that a fence does not help or promote either objective.³⁴

Summary and Post Case Study Analysis: Implications for Public Administration and Policy Theory

To the people of the Rio Grande Valley, the border fence represents a potential dystopian threat to their existence. The social construction of their reality is intruded upon by the DHS' proposed border fence. Fears that a way of life will be lost forever have led to efforts by citizens and their representatives to make the most of an almost seemingly lost cause. The lower Rio Grande Valley is largely unknown to most other Americans who are unaware of the every day living experiences important to the existence of the people of South Texas. Abstract notions held by some U.S. citizens and policymakers outside of the region that the proposed border fence will keep out the bad guys – terrorists and illegals alike – were promulgated and fostered by the DHS Secretary and corporate interests concerned with obtaining their share of the billions of federal dollars being made available to these entities through its construction, relying heavily on the fears of another 9-11-styled terrorist attack. The symbolism of 9-11 exists in the minds of policy makers and the American public ready to be manipulated to create an emergency need for things like a protective border wall. The bureaucratic failures of FEMA and DHS with regard to the perceived inadequate response to Hurricane Katrina have continued the pressure for the affected agencies to improve incorporating the “best business practices” available to government policymakers. The people most directly affected by the actual presence of the border fence will suffer the most – those who actually reside in the Rio Grande Valley.

The DHS and its Secretary continued to press their bureaucratically-induced claims for the necessity of the border fence thoughtlessly over the objections of the people who have much to lose in an economically disadvantaged region of the United States. The bureau will be supported in their promotion of the border fence by

the iron triangle of members of respective legislative committees and corporate interests. Too much money and power is already at stake.³⁵ The people of the Rio Grande Valley will have to continue to depend upon those with the means to oppose the “wall” – the local business and university communities, members of Congress and Texas legislators sympathetic to their plight, state and federal courts through lawsuits, and potential allies in the environmental movement as well as sympathetic federal government environmental agents. The poor and dispossessed people who happen to reside in properties along the Rio Grande River are entirely at their collective mercy. Will the local residents be able to receive at least a modicum of support from the federal government in its attempts to impose a fence along the border by improving the condition of the levees? So far the answer is “no.”

The implications for American public administration and theory are obvious. What can we learn from actual lived experience as opposed to idealistic-bureaucratic conjecture? What are the real policy implications for promoting an expensive border fence for the long term well-being of the people who reside in an important and unique cultural region of our country? Policy makers in the U.S. need to weigh the effects of the consequences of their actions before hastily concluding that seemingly popular salves for immigration and terrorist ills involve alienating people from their communities at the expense of billions of taxpayer dollars.³⁶ The poor and dispossessed in the lower Rio Grande Valley continue to be exploited by a federal government using an unthinking and uncaring agency, eager to provide “homeland security,” ironically by taking property from the people.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

- 1 The Department of Homeland Security. (2008). "The National Strategy for Homeland Security," (web site) accessed 1/21/2008 at http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/gc_1193938363680.shtm.
- 2 The Department of Homeland Security. (2008). "National Response Framework." January 2008, <http://www.fema.gov/NRF> accessed 2/1/2008.
- 3 David M. Walker. (2007). "Homeland Security: Management and Programmatic Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security." Government Accountability Office (GAO), Tuesday, February 6, 2007, GAO-07-398T.
- 4 Terence M. Garrett and Geoffrey D. Peterson. (2005). "On the Border (Patrol): Surveying Methods for an Agency in Transition to the Department of Homeland Security," in *The Homeland Security Review*, Winter 2005, Vol. 1/1: 39-52.
- 5 Ralph P. Hummel and Camilla Stivers. (1998). "Government Isn't Us: The Possibility of Democratic Knowledge in Representative Government," in *Government Is Us: Public Administration in an Anti-Government Era*. Edited by Cheryl S. King and Camilla Stivers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- 6 Edmund Husserl, (1969). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W. R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.). London: Collier. (Original work published as *Ideen zu einer reinen Phanomenologie und phanomenologischen Philosophie* in 1931). See the adaptation of Husserl's work in Terence M. Garrett. (2001). "The Waco, Texas, ATF Raid and *Challenger* Launch Decision: Management, Judgment and the Knowledge Analytic" in the *American Review of Public Administration*, 31(1), 66-86.
- 7 The DHS estimates that about 11,550,000 "unauthorized immigrants" reside in the U.S. for 2006. See Michael Hoefler, Nancy Rytina, and Christopher Campbell. (2007). "Population Estimates 2007: Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2006." Office of Immigration Statistics Policy Directorate, Department of Homeland Security.
- 8 *El Paso Times*. (2008). "Chertoff warns of long lines, tells critics to 'grow up'." January 17, 2008 accessed 1/31/2008 at http://www.elpasotimes.com/ci_7999374?source=email, italics added for emphasis.
- 9 Ralph P. Hummel. (2008) *The Bureaucratic Experience: The Post-Modern Challenge*, 5th Edition. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, p. 180. In conversations I had with UTB/TSC "fence" negotiations team, there were initially no attempts by the feds to have real conversations with the university. It was as if there was *no need to think*, or negotiate, other than the terms of the agency's interpretation of the policy – to build an 18 feet high steel fence. Subsequent attempts by the university negotiating team to bring the DHS officials before federal judges to have true dialogue, eventually forced the federal bureaucrats to think and surrender vital bits of information reluctantly to allow the UT System to provide the present 10 feet high – more aesthetically pleasing – structure on campus property.

10 Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. (1980). *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Irvington Publishers, p. 83.

11 *ibid*, pp. 82-3.

12 It literally means “univocality.” Thanks to Ralph Hummel for this translation.

13 Alfred Schutz. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Translated by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, p. 82.

14 See Orwell’s *1984* for examples of a “dystopia.” The applicable passage is...

“...by the fourth decade of the twentieth century all the main currents of political thought were authoritarian. The earthly paradise had been discredited at exactly the moment when it became realizable. Every new political theory, by what ever name it called itself, led back to hierarchy and regimentation. And in the general hardening of outlook that set in round about 1930, which had been long abandoned, in some cases for hundreds of years—*imprisonment without trial, the use of war prisoners as slaves, public executions, torture to extract confessions, the use of hostages and the deportation of whole populations*—not only became common again, but were tolerated by people who considered themselves enlightened and progressive” (Source: George Orwell. (1961). *1984*. New York: New American Library of World Literatures, Inc. (Originally published in 1949), pp. 168-169, italics added for emphasis).

The section has a bearing on the border fence issue, especially with regard to DHS and INS tactics – imprisonment without trial, torture (with regard to captured alleged terrorists), and the deportation of whole populations. Examining Orwell’s critique seems realizable in the present tense, at least for people being adversely affected – in this case, along the border of the U.S. and Mexico.

15 Lance J. Noe, (2002). “9-11 as Nostalgia: Implications for Public Administration Theory and Practice,” in *Administrative Theory e² Praxis*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2002: 572–606.

16 The 2008 “National Response Framework” has replaced earlier “Plans” from 2004, and 2006, respectively. See The Department of Homeland Security. (2007). “The National Strategy for Homeland Security,” (Acrobat Reader file) accessed 1/21/2008 at http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nat_strat_homelandsecurity_2007.pdf, Homeland Security Council, October 2007. See also Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2007). “National Incident Management System,” 501 Draft accessed 2/1/2008 at <http://fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-nims.pdf>.

17 The Department of Homeland Security. (2008). “Major Management Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security: Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2007 – Annual Financial Report,” Office of the Inspector General. OIG-08-11, Washington, DC, January 8, 2008.

18 I attended the Mexican-American Legislative Caucus hearing and spoke with a state representative and his chief administrative officer about SBInet’s lobbying efforts the previous evening. I was also told that other “vendors” were interested in building portions of the “fence” including Motorola and Halliburton. Apparently big business sees government contracting opportunities in the new “industry.”

19 The Department of Homeland Security. (2008). "Major Management Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security: Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2007 – Annual Financial Report," Office of the Inspector General. OIG-08-11, Washington, DC, January 8, 2008.

20 A Pew Charitable Trust poll conducted on April 12, 2007 found that 46% of the American people nationally favored building a fence 700 miles along the Mexican Border. Forty-eight percent opposed the fence while 6% stated they didn't know. See: Doherty, Carroll. (2007). "The Immigration Divide: Reform is a Potential Wedge Issue for Both Republicans and Democrats." *Pew Research Center Publications* (April 12, 2007) accessed 1/29/2008 at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/450/immigration-wedge-issue> .

21 The White House. (2007). "Fact Sheet: Improving Border Security and Immigration Within Existing Law." <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/print/20070810.html>. Accessed 1/28/2008.

22 U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (November 2007). (Draft) *Environmental Impact Statement For Construction, Maintenance, and Operation of Tactical Infrastructure, Rio Grande Valley Sector, Texas.* Unpublished manuscript prepared December 11, 2007.

23 Anthony Zavaleta and Yolanda Zamarripa. (2007). "A Rapid Response Policy Analysis Report to: The Mayor of Brownsville, Texas, The Honorable Pat Ahumada, On the Proposed Impact to Brownsville, Texas as Described in the (Draft) *Environmental Impact Statement For Construction, Maintenance, and Operation of Tactical Infrastructure, Rio Grande Valley Sector, Texas.*" U.S. Department of Homeland Security, November 2007. Unpublished manuscript prepared December 11, 2007. Dr. Tony Zavaleta and Yolanda Zamarripa of The Cross Border Institute for Regional Development (CBIRD) at UTB/TSC analyzed points made by the *DIIS Draft Environmental Impact Study* and found numerous errors and problems with the publication. The points are recounted here:

The Draft Environmental Report...

- ...lists a total of 22.4 miles of fence is proposed to be built in the area of Brownsville, Texas, sections O-17 to O-21.
- ...does not consider the proposed Weir Dam and Reservoir Project to have been adequately evaluated.
- ...does not address the degradation of air quality in urban Brownsville during the construction phase
- ...does not address the possible consequences in the increase in noise pollution during the construction phase; the report erroneously cites "numerous industrial facilities in the city" as reason not to be concerned.
- ...suggests that most of Cameron County and therefore the area around urban Brownsville, Texas is agricultural land and incorrectly suggests that there will be minimal impact to urban and suburban areas.
- ...does not take into consideration that the tactical infrastructure (fence) in the area of urban Brownsville, Texas will serve as a serious deterrent the drain off of flood waters after a catastrophic event like a hurricane.

- ...suggests that the destruction of native brush lands along the Rio Grande in the area of Brownsville, Texas will have insignificant impact on vegetation. This is incorrect.
- ...suggests that there is less diversity and value in the native wildlife and aquatic resources in the urban area of Brownsville, Texas and this is simply not true.
- ...is not aware and does not take into consideration the historic and cultural value of the river bank in the area above and below Brownsville, Texas. This is especially true in the report's failure to truly understand the importance of Fort Brown.
- ...devalues or simply fails to understand that the actions leading up to the construction of a border fence constitutes a major violation of Environmental Justice to this mostly minority and poor population in the area of Brownsville, Texas. This is clearly evident in their callous assertion that, "negative impact (to the government?) Would be mitigated through the purchase at a fair price," of the poor people's homes. This is Environmental racism at its worst.
- ...disregards the diversity and importance of the numerous utilities and infrastructure located along the banks of the Rio Grande that would be negatively impacted.
- ...contains erroneous comments about the Texas Southmost College Bond Project.
- ...does not address the wholesale destruction of historic neighborhoods and the uprooting of families by their action. (Zavaleta and Zamarripa 2007)

24 Kevin Sieff, (2007). "Land Granted from King of Spain Could Get New Owner: Uncle Sam," in *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), December 8, 2007. Accessed 12/9/2007 at http://www.themonitor.com/news/land_7203_article.html/border_tamez.html.

25 Ralph Blumenthal. (2008). "In Texas, Weighing Life with a Fence," in *The New York Times*, January 13, 2008, accessed 2/5/2008 at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A03E5D6143AF930A25752C0A96E9C8B63&scp=1&sq=rio+grande+valley+border+fence&st=nyt>.

26 Kevin Sieff, (2007). "Land Granted from King of Spain Could Get New Owner: Uncle Sam," in *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), December 8, 2007. Accessed 12/9/2007 at http://www.themonitor.com/news/land_7203_article.html/border_tamez.html.

27 Emma Perez-Trevino. (2008). "DHS, Property Owners Face Off," in *The Brownsville Herald* (Brownsville, Texas), January 25, 2008. Accessed 2/4/2008 at http://www.themonitor.com/news/land_8437_article.html/hanen_property.html.

28 *ibid*.

29 Ralph Blumenthal. (2008). "In Texas, Weighing Life with a Fence," in *The New York Times*, January 13, 2008, accessed 2/5/2008 at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A03E5D6143AF930A25752C0A96E9C8B63&scp=1&sq=rio+grande+valley+border+fence&st=nyt>.

30 *The New York Times*. (2007). "Border Fence Could Imperil Wildlife,

Environmentalists Say," accessed 2/5/2008 at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/22/us/22texas.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=rio+grande+valley+border+fence&st=nyt&oref=slog in.

31 Jackie Leatherman. (2007). "County Leaders Meet with Federal Officials to Discuss Fence, Levee," in *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), October 23, 2007, accessed 1/29/2008 at <http://www.themonitor.com/common/prINTER/view.php?db=monitortx&id=6079>.

32 At the Mexican-American Legislative Caucus, when the chair of the proceedings, Texas State Representative Rick Noriega asked the Rio Grande Valley CBP Sector representative giving testimony how many terrorists had been apprehended in the region since 9-11. The answer was none.

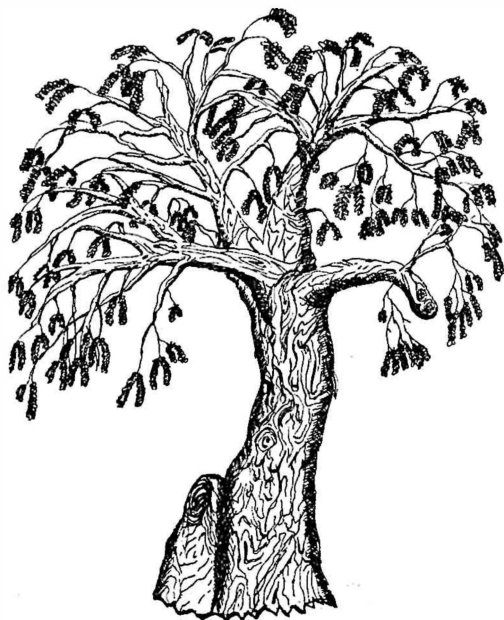
33 Jackie Leatherman. (2008). "CBP Spokesman: Combined Border Fence, Levee Repairs a 'Workable, Feasible, Solution'," in *The Monitor* (McAllen, Texas), January 28, 2008, accessed 1/29/2008 at <http://www.themonitor.com/common/prINTER/view.php?db=monitortx&id=8403>. The solution was to reimburse the taxpayers of Hidalgo County the money raised to reinforce the levees. As of June 2009, no money from the federal government to the county has been forthcoming.

34 Garcia, Juliet. (2008). "Border Fence Information," The University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College (website) accessed 2/5/2008 at <http://blue.utb.edu/newsandinfo/BorderFenceIssue.htm>.

35 As of June 2009, there are no signs that the Obama administration and the new DHS Secretary – former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano – are deviating from the border fence plans planned and promoted by the previous Bush administration.

36 The direct costs of building the fence in the Rio Grande Valley under federal contract is \$7.5 million per mile of construction. UTB/TSC's negotiated ten feet high fence cost – complete with electronic surveillance equipment – is \$1.5 million per mile. (Source: personal conversations with UTB/TSC negotiating team members.)

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY



**The Feminization of Political
Office in Brownsville
The Brownsville City Commission
Election of 2009**

by

Gabriela Sosa Zavaleta

At the beginning of the Mexican American War in 1845 all of the land located north of the Rio Grande River in the region where Brownsville would soon be founded was owned by wealthy Matamoros families. The male family heads operated large ranching and import/export enterprises, while their wives and daughters lived comfortably in an “Old World” style, in which they were expected to be educated in the classics and the arts. Local wealthy families sent both their sons and daughters to New Orleans to acquire culture and education, to New York and to Cuba for commercial interests, and to Spain for maintaining connections with relatives there.¹ The mothers were “proper” ladies who raised their children to take up high positions in the Mexican government, the church hierarchy, the military, and society. The ladies were encouraged to socialize amongst themselves, to join women’s and church organizations, and to support charitable organizations and functions, but not to be involved in the politics of state and much less local politics, which was considered unsavory. It is reasonable to assume that these women always enjoyed their husband’s ear within the safety of their homes and made their mark on the outcome of local politics from behind the scenes.

Matamoros, as the older sister city, exerted a strong influence on the new town of Brownsville. In the second half of the 19th century, two mission schools – one Quaker and the other Southern Presbyterian – flourished in Matamoros. It was estimated that, by 1893, more than 600 Matamoros girls had been educated and pre-

pared for life in the cosmopolitan twin cities.² An exemplar of female power in Matamoros in 1842 is provided by the life of Doña Guadalupe Cisneros de García, the probable grandmother of María Lorenza Hinojosa. Both women were descendants of Don Rafael García, the original grant holder of Santa Isabella grant, a portion of enormous Espiritu Santo grant to Don Salvador de la Garza in 1781.³ Doña Guadalupe single-handedly paid for the construction of the Chapel of Our Lady of Refuge.

María Lorenza Hinojosa García, a pianist and composer born to a wealthy landed family in Matamoros in 1864, provides an example of women in the arts. Her father, Víctor Hinojosa Longoria, married Maria Rosa García, the daughter of a large land-grant family. María Lorenza received her primary school education from another well known and influential Matamoros school mistress, Eduvigis Celhay de González Gascué. María Lorenza Hinojosa received continued education abroad at the prestigious *Conservatorio Nacional de Música de la Ciudad de México*, returning to Matamoros as a very sought-after cosmopolitan woman in 1904. Immediately, she set about educating the young women of Matamoros and Brownsville in the performing arts.⁴

The first branch of the Order of the Incarnate Word in the New World was established in Brownsville in 1853.⁵ Mother Superior Clare, Mother Ang, her assistant, Sister Ephram, and Sister Dominic arrived in Brownsville from France in 1852.⁶ The formal education of young women in Brownsville and Matamoros began with the sisters' arrival. Most of the educated females born and raised in Brownsville, as well as and many from Matamoros, were taught by the sisters of the Incarnate Word. These women became the wives of the next generation of Brownsville-Matamoros leaders, with numerous marriages between Matamoros and Brownsville families.

Brownsville was a rapidly emerging and important "central place" in the late 19th century, and, as such, it produced powerful and noteworthy women, like the merchants Mrs. George Krausse and

Mrs. H. Bollack.⁷ Early Brownsville saw a rapid influx of male entrepreneurs after the Mexican American War and during the time from 1850 to the American War of Rebellion. Mostly single males they were drawn to the area in search of a combination of adventure and opportunity. In the early days, very few women accompanied their husbands to the Border, much less venturing there alone. Matamoros' many destitute women from its large underclass provided early Brownsville with an ample supply of prostitutes. Brownsville's early settlers, however, both Anglo and Mexican, gradually included more respectable women, including the influx of nuns, army nurses, and teachers. From the 1880s through the turn of the century, Brownsville became less of a lawless frontier town and more of a community of families.

W. H. Chatfield cites the civilizing work of women's societies in support of the Catholic Church, such as The Children of Mary; the Lady of the Rosary; the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners; and the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. ⁸ Brownsville's Episcopal Church of the Advent is one of the city's oldest, and, by 1893, had formed the Ladies' Mite American Missionary Society and the Ladies' Aid Society, both organized to raise funds for the church and to aid the needy.⁹

All in all, there were many notable and influential frontier women in both Matamoros and Brownsville in the 19th century. The early history of the area was dominated by the *Espritu Santo* land grant. The Spanish Crown gave this important grant (including today's Cameron County, Texas) to José Salvador de la Garza, who married Maria Gertrudis de la Garza Falcón. Their descendants include some of the area's most illustrious women, including Estefana Goseascochea Cavazos de Cortina, the mother of Juan Nepomuceno Cortina.¹⁰

The Ballí clan and their matriarch Rosa Maria Hinojosa de Ballí and her descendants were also large ranch owners with a major impact on local politics.¹¹ Inter-racial marriages between Anglo

and Mexican elite families during the period 1870 to 1970 often solidified land holdings and the political prominence of these families for generations. Many of these same families and their descendants are prominent in Matamoros and Brownsville society to this day.¹²

“Hispanization” of the electoral process in Cameron (and Hidalgo) County continued during the decades following World War II.¹³ Thus with availability of the GI Bill and a college education, as well as with the increase in participation of the Spanish-surnamed electorate, by the 1980s, Mexican Americans began to win political elections. Political campaigns by women were also slow to appear.¹⁴

Early Brownsville Politics

The origin of South Texas, Cameron County, and Brownsville politics is a classic example of the adage “to the winner go the spoils.” Before the ink was dry on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, establishing the border between Mexico and the United States at the Rio Grande River (Rio Bravo), speculators and carpetbaggers began pouring into the area south of the Nueces River. With special “permits” backed by the U.S. Federal government, law enforcement and courts were established and political entities were established and the newcomers were appointed to local, state, and federal judgeships and commissions at every level.

This began a period of patronage that made the previous patron system look like child’s play. In the period between 1850 and 1950, political bosses often exerted control over governmental offices. This was the case from Corpus Christi to Laredo to the Border and is credited with the election of Lyndon Johnson, Texas Senator in 1948, and the infamous box 13 scandal of Duval County.¹⁵ To say that South Texas politics in the early 20th century was a “good old boy” system is the ultimate understatement.

Women in Brownsville politics Post WWII

The emergence of women in Brownsville politics, as in other similar communities, began in offices associated with school districts. Educated and well-connected women were hired as school principals, but were not initially considered for elected positions on the School Board. Starting with Mrs. Volney W. Taylor, who served from 1940 through 1950, women held positions on the Brownsville School Board. Following her multiple terms, Mrs. Ethel Cook Taylor served from 1947 to 1953. It would be more than ten years before another woman would serve on the BISD board of trustees. The Blackburns would dominate school board politics between 1962 and 1975. All of these women controlled the superintendent's position, the appointment of principals, and the hiring of teachers and coaches. Also serving from 1964 to 1966 was Mrs. Stuart Eacho.

The period from the immediate pre-war years until the election of Graciana de Peña and Francis L. Morales in the 1970s, was dominated by Anglo women. The pattern of the previous thirty years changed dramatically in the late 1970s, both on the school board (with the election of *Latinas* and women in general) and then (with the election of *Latinos*) on the Brownsville City Commission.¹⁶ In the period from the late 1950's through the 1960's, Brownsville city politics was controlled for a time by powerful and popular doctors. Since the Brownsville City Commission consisted of five members – a weak mayor and four commissioners – all elected at large, it required a total or block of three votes to decide any action or ordinance. For many years, doctors served as mayors, along with their hand-picked "ticket" for city commissioners.

Brownsville pharmacist Antonio "Tony" Gonzalez served as Brownsville's first Spanish-surnamed mayor during the 1960's. Not an independent, he was elected with a slate which characterized itself as "Downtown Businessmen." This group, which contained no women, controlled the Brownville City Commission for a decade. The Ruben Edelstein administration, which followed

Gonzalez, continued the period of control of the downtown businessmen, but, during this time, in the late 1970s, Bernice Kowalski Brown was elected the first woman to serve on the Brownsville City Commission. Brown, a member of a prominent pioneer Kowalski family and the wife of respected Brownsville businessman and political activist Marvin Brown, was elected along with Emilio Hernandez in his first term as mayor. Commissioner Brown was noted for her advocacy for improving public services in Brownsville, including Police, Fire, and EMS. Bernice was born in Brownsville on 1 June 1918, graduated from Villa Maria High School, and attended the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio. She was active in school board politics for many years before her election to the Brownsville City Commission. She died on 27 August 2003.¹⁷ Her family heritage and social and political activities followed the model for emerging woman described above.

In 1979, Emilio Hernandez was elected mayor of Brownsville, defeating Mayor Edelstein in a hotly-contested race. For the first time, a Brownsville election was determined by grassroots Hispanic (Chicano) politics. Political observers credit Mayor Hernandez as Brownsville's first independent Hispanic Mayor. Meanwhile, Commissioner Brown was defeated in her bid for re-election by Harry McNair, the son of a former mayor. Dr. Tony Zavaleta and Bobby Lackner were both elected in 1983, and Brownsville's next woman commissioner, Susan Austin, was elected in 1985.¹⁸

In the term following that of Bernice Kowalski Brown, Susan Austin, a popular Brownsville realtor, was elected City Commissioner. Susan, who was not a Brownsville native, was not expected to be elected. Her election showed that the old system of "natives only" could be broken by a popular candidate in city elections. During her single term in office, Susan became embroiled in a corruption scandal, in which she had no involvement. However the distastefulness of Brownsville's "take no prisoners politics" caused her to relinquish her office and leave town.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, women were elected to democratic Cameron County positions, including to democratic judgeships. These women in these important elected positions set the stage for the participation and election of women as formidable candidates from the 1990s to the present. Aurora Gonzalez de la Garza was elected County Clerk in 1980 and continues in office to this day. Powerful women judges elected during this time period, 1980 to 2010, include Migdalia Lopez, District Court Judge; Janet Leal, County Court at Law and District Court Judge; Elia Cornejo Lopez, District Court Judge and County Court at Law Judge; and Linda Salazar, Justice of the Peace. Additionally, Yolanda de Leon was elected District Attorney of Cameron County in the early 21st century. Both Elia Cornejo Lopez and Linda Salazar served on the BISD board in the late 1990s, using this political base as a springboard to judgeships. Additionally, during the same period of the 1980s-1990s, numerous women were elected to the Brownsville School Board.

During the period from the early 1980s to the present, women have also served on the Texas Southmost College Board of Trustees, including, most notably: Mrs. Mary Rose Cardenas, who is regarded as the architect of the partnership between TSC and the UT System creating UTB/TSC; Mrs. Jean Echoff, a retired BISD principal; Mrs. Dolly Zimmerman, Port Isabel High School Teacher; and Rosemary Breedlove, nurse and business woman. The woman most recently elected to the TSC board of trustees is Adela Garza, who previously served as a Los Fresnos school board member.¹⁹

Returning to the late 1990s and going forward to the early 21st century, Jackie Lockett – a popular environmentalist – served with Mayor Pat Ahumada during his first administration in the early 1990s. Mrs. Lockett, wife of a Brownsville dentist, was a major force introducing the concept of environmentalism to the city. Lockett served one term. Her term in office was followed by that of Alice Wilson, a Brownsville native and wife of a popular Brownsville developer, Vance Wilson. Alice Wilson, who served

during Mayor Henry Gonzalez's administration, was interested in the planning and zoning commission and the continued development of Brownsville. Alice Wilson died, suddenly, still in office, and a hotly contested race followed to fill her un-expired term. Ultimately, Alice Wilson's vacant spot on the Commission was filled by Eddie Trevino, Jr., who defeated former Mayor Pat Ahumada.²⁰

The most important event in the feminization of Brownsville politics in the early 21st century was the election of Blanca Vela to the position of Mayor, defeating Henry Gonzalez in his bid for reelection. In a hard fought race against a powerful male candidate, Blanca Vela, the wife of a sitting Federal Judge, Filemon Vela, became Brownsville's first woman Mayor in 1999. The election of Blanca Vela as Mayor was the successful culmination of the women's movement for political realization in Brownsville in the late 20th century. The power of the women's vote was substantial and sustainable, leading to the election of Sally Arroyo to the Brownsville city commission. Ms. Arroyo, who had been Blanca Vela's campaign manager, served as commissioner during the administration of Mayor Eddie Trevino, Jr., in 2003.

The Brownsville City Commission Election of 2009

The administration of Mayor Eddie Trevino, Jr., (2003-2007) and the commissioners who served with him, Ricardo Longoria, Jr., Charlie Atkinson, Carlos A. Cisneros, Edward C. Camarillo, Sally Miniel Arroyo, and Leonel T. Garza, marked a major departure from previous commissions. The commission was split into at least two factions (some would say more), and it was commonly believed that external political forces – not the best interest of the community – governed the decision of those factions on the commission. In 2007, Commissioner Arroyo decided to run for Mayor, stating that “the testosterone level [on the commission] is significant,” and indicating that the male majority had not allowed her to accomplish her vision for Brownsville.²¹ Hoping to repeat Blanca Vela's historic defeat of Mayor Henry Gonzalez, Arroyo was de-

feated in her bid for Mayor by Pat Ahumada, who, in 2007, was re-elected Mayor of Brownville. This new and all-male administration lacked a woman's perspective for the first time in many years.

In fact, the in-fighting and fractionalization of the City Commission became an unbearable embarrassment to the community as the "run up" to the 2009 commission election approached. A major portion of the commission did not support Mayor Ahumada during his second term, just as they had not during his first term, back in 1991. With several major initiatives underway – including Brownsville's ambitious strategic plan "Imagine Brownsville" and the continued development of the Brownsville Sports Park, it became obvious to the community that the Brownsville City Commissioners were at loggerheads. Numerous candidates – some known and others new – began to test the political waters in search of support.

No sooner was Pat Ahumada elected than prospective candidates began thinking about the 2009 race, but it was not until March of 2009 that candidates made formal announcements for the May election. The race was on. Commissioner Leonel Garza let it be known that he would not seek re-election and Rose Zavaletta Gowen, a respected physician and member of a prominent Brownsville family, announced for the empty seat. On March 8, 2009, the controversial Brownsville blog *El Rocinante* wrote, "Rose Gowen is out of the gates smoking. She announces her candidacy for the city commission and then is named Woman of the Year by the Zonta Club. The ladies are speaking to us loud and clear; change is in the air. While political men bullshit, smoke, drink, and pass money under the table, the women in this town really do some work to support their candidates."²²

By the time of the filing deadline, there were three city commission positions up for grabs; two were districts, while one was at large, and all had female candidates and challengers. All three positions had formidable opponents, including two incumbent male

commissioners: Carlos Cisneros and Edward Camarillo. Dr. Rose Zavaletta Gowen was opposed by popular retired assistant city manager Carlos Ayala and newcomer Roman Perez. Incumbent Commissioner Carlos Cisneros was opposed by former *Brownsville Herald* Editor Melissa Zamora and accountant Moses Sorola, while, in the West Brownsville district, incumbent commissioner Edward Camarillo was challenged by perennial candidate Robert Uresti and newcomer Argelia Miller. Camarillo was expected to be re-elected easily, and he was. However, the other two hotly contested races had to be decided by run-off elections.

The Gowen-Ayala race was less controversial than the Cisneros-Zamora race. Dr. Rose Zavaletta Gowen's decision to omit her maiden name and base her campaign on her own merit was admirable, but caused controversy in local political blogs. While this decision raised questions among the followers of Brownsville politics, it was never an issue, as Gowen, a respected physician, was considered the favorite from the beginning. Gowen was supported by a coalition of women, the medical and legal community, and political action committee contributions, while Cisneros – considered to be in the pocket of Brownsville developers – appeared to be aligned with Gowen. The fact that their political signs appeared all over town side by side fueled the belief that they were running together. The sign issue was a rookie mistake that should never have happened, but it caused many Brownsville voters to question Gowen's motives.

On election-day, Gowen finished first in a race of three candidates, but did not garner more than fifty percent of the votes needed to win outright. This forced a run-off thirty days later between Gowen and Ayala, who, by all accounts, was gaining strength. Throughout the race and run-off period, Gowen is said to have never voiced her position on any issue, staying away from facts and running on her name and popularity in the community rather than on issues. The Ayala camp claimed that she had no idea what Brownsville's issues were. Her strategy of not associating herself with the Zavaletta family of politicians and by not taking a posi-

tion on the issues was a gamble that allowed her to overcome her association with Cisneros and ultimately win the election.

The Cisneros-Zamora election was not so easily determined. The incumbent, Carlos Cisneros, deservedly or not, was seen as being “in the pockets” of powerful developers and as conducting a very dirty and under-handed campaign against a respected woman. As the month between the election and the run-off wore down, it became painfully clear that Brownsville voters were going to throw incumbent commissioner Cisneros out of office. In the final days, this painful reality led most voters to distance themselves from him, isolating him at political gatherings as all watched the sad political destruction of a once popular and powerful commissioner.

The Brownsville City Commission race of 2009 began with an all male commission, with three positions up for grab. After one of the most unsavory election seasons in recent Brownville history, two of the six commissioners were replaced by respected and knowledgeable women. Zavaletta Gowen is considered a candidate of the old Brownsville elite and therefore will have to prove that she is a commissioner for all of Brownsville. Many believe that this will not be possible. Zamora, on the other hand, does not have a political pedigree, but is very knowledgeable and, after two months on the job, has shown herself to be independent and capable. At least for the next two years, the testosterone level on the Brownsville City Commission has been greatly reduced, and the boys have taken to fighting amongst themselves. In the run-up to the next mayoral election, we can expect two things to happen: (1) for the women to carve out a niche for themselves – they are currently un-aligned politically) and (2) for the males to have a feeding frenzy over who will run for mayor in 2011. In the meantime, it is clear that Brownsville voters are tired of the boys and that more women are needed in Brownsville politics.

What has happened in Brownsville may be summed up by examining the work of renowned scholar, Jose Angel Gutiérrez. He discovered that Mexican American females find difficulty in

running for and being elected to political office in Texas because "...of socioeconomic factors. For example, economic status and educational attainment are very real barriers to political participation in the electoral arena; political office is not affordable to most lower and middle class Mexican American women. Factors that have historically obstructed Hispanic women's paths to public office – like age, family size and obligation, cultural bias, and marital status – also continue and serve to exclude women from politics and service." ²³ Zavaletta Gowen and Zamora are both well-connected professional women, who paid their dues to the political establishment and picked the correct time to run, using an anti-incumbent sentiment to win victories.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

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Lost, but Not Found: Accommodation in Oscar Casares' *Brownsville*

by

Mimosa Stephenson

Oscar Casares, born May 7, 1964, is the son of Everardo and Severa Casares and a native of Brownsville, Texas. He graduated from Gladys Porter High School and spent two years at Texas Southmost College before earning a bachelor's degree in advertising from the University of Texas at Austin in 1987. After a couple years in Minneapolis looking for an advertising job, he returned to Austin, took a position with GSD&M, and worked in advertising for eight years. After retelling stories in a bar that he heard as a child from his uncles Hector and Nico, he wrote down several and published two: "Yolanda" in *The Threepenny Review* and "Jerry Fuentes" in *Northwest Review*. In 1999, he accepted a fellowship to participate in the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, receiving an M.F.A. in creative writing in 2001. In 2002, he was awarded a Dobie Paisano Fellowship, which enabled him to spend six months at the J. Frank Dobie Ranch to pursue his writing. He also received the Copernicus Society of America's James Michener Award, designed to provide financial support for writing fiction. In 2003, he published the highly acclaimed *Brownsville*, a collection of short stories, including "Yolanda" and "Jerry Fuentes." In 2006, he was awarded a writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has also taught composition at the University of Texas at San Antonio and is now a member of the English Department at the University of Texas at Austin. His first novel, *Amigoland*, set in South Texas and northern Mexico, is due out in 2009.

Oscar Casares' *Brownsville* is a remarkable collection of short stories for an author's first book. Students at the University of Texas at Brownsville love the stories because they recognize Brownsville

Coffee Shop #1, H.E.B., Lincoln Park, and a sensational murder that hit the news a few years back when an irate mother hired a hit man through a *curandera* to shoot the young man who stole her daughter's virginity and then deserted her. The stories are realistic in their portrayal of life also, dealing especially with the loss that comes with the change in the seasons. Casares says they concern "the struggles, the challenges, the frailties people have—how they fail, how they love, in this very subtle but very profound way."¹ Each story tells of some loss and of the protagonist's attempt to recover what he has lost or to find justice. He doesn't really find what he lost that has pained him, but he does discover some sort of accommodation that gives him a sense that justice has been served. Each story ends with an inconclusive recovery, suggesting that there is more to the story. Life is like that. Victories seem only partial, and losses cannot be totally atoned for. Even with an appropriate revenge, what one has lost is not found. The stories are bittersweet but ring true. They tell of a culture where, despite its strong Roman Catholic presence, revenge is valued more than forgiveness, and machismo is thriving. To a certain extent the stories are open ended; as the reader sees into the future the story leaves a blank.

The most poignant story of loss is "Domingo," which tells of a poor humble Mexican who leaves his wife in Ciudad Victoria to work as an illegal yardman in Brownsville. He and his wife were childless for many years, but finally when hope seemed gone, their daughter Sara was born. However, soon after her first birthday, she fell into a pit with live coals at the bottom prepared to heat water for laundry. After a month of suffering while her parents pleaded with God for her healing, she died. Domingo has spent twenty years grieving as he lives alone in a borrowed room, avoiding the border patrol and earning money to send home to his wife in Mexico for her support. In an attempt to find solace, he visits a tree on Levee Street where desperate believers have found the face of the Virgin Mary in the bark of a tree. He begs God for forgiveness for his turning away from Him in his anguish after the

death of his child. One night he climbs over the fence and up into the tree, from which he can see across to Matamoros on the other side of the Rio Grande and on to his wife and his daughter, "now a grown woman."² With these words, the story ends. Domingo has been seeking peace and escape from his guilt for allowing the child to fall into the pit, and for a moment he finds it. According to Christopher Zenner, "Casares reveals the ultimate paradox of faith, namely that in the darkest moments of doubt and despair, faith's potential is greatest,"³ but the reader recognizes that his seeing his wife and daughter is a passing vision that will dissipate, leaving him as desolate and lonely as before. He has reached a momentary stay against his despair, but the accommodation will not last. In his poverty and loneliness there is more grief awaiting him.

"Big Jesse, Little Jesse" is a less poignant, but still sad, story of a man's loss of his son. Jesse is separated from his wife Corina, who has their son, also named Jesse, living with her. The son is the main problem between the couple as the father wants the boy to grow up to be a man, and his mother babies him. The six-year-old boy, one of whose legs is an inch shorter than the other, likes to read but is totally uninterested in the male activities that interest his father. At the father's insistence, the three go to a carnival, where another father encourages his son to bully Jesse's son while they ride in bumper cars. Little Jesse begins to scream, and Corina goes into the bumper-car arena to rescue her son. Big Jesse and the other father fight in the grass until the police come to pull them apart. Jesse is hauled off by the police, limping because he has lost one of his shoes, while the crowd laughs and jeers at the entertainment the spectacle of the fighting men has created. Jesse, who has wanted to be proud of his male offspring, is made the butt of the crowd's humor, and their laughter is the only thing he can hear at the end of the story. *Machismo* is a major part of the Hispanic culture in Brownsville, Texas. The story beautifully captures the inadequacy of that tradition as a *modus operandi* of life. Ultimately *machismo* does not satisfy, but it demeans, as each male

tries to outdo the other. Certainly Corina is not right in the story, but neither is Big Jesse. Both will continue to lose.

“Charro” concerns a barking dog, and is another story where the protagonist asserts his masculinity, but this time with something learned by the end. Marcelo Torres was brought up in the United States by a man of Mexican descent who, after having a disagreement with another man, called his five sons together, gave each a gun, and commanded that the first one to meet his enemy shoot him. Marcelo’s oldest brother spent a year in a Reynosa jail for carrying out his father’s order. Marcelo’s current problem is the barking dog next door. After warning his neighbor, Marcelo drives the dog to the jetties at the end of Boca Chica beach before abandoning it, poisons it only to be forced to clean up the dog’s vomit, and finally decides to endure the dog. When his wife is traumatized after running over the dog while backing out of the driveway, Marcelo feels remorse, and wanting to make amends for his mistreatment of the dog, he constructs a makeshift coffin of cardboard boxes and digs a hole in his backyard to bury the dog. Ultimately he grieves that the dog is dead, but knowing that Sanchez will never believe he didn’t deliberately kill the dog himself, he buries the dog without telling his neighbor. Marcelo realizes he “had tried to live his father’s life, but now it felt as if he were standing in the middle of a river trying to stretch his arms and touch both sides.”⁴ To be a macho man like his Mexican father he has made a big issue out of the dog, but he is an American too, who wants to care about his neighbor. The story is one of the most positive in the collection as the protagonist grows beyond the *machismo* he has been taught. The dog is lost, but to a certain extent Marcelo is found because he does accommodate himself to the dog and to the needs of his neighbors, who care about Charro. The reader is convinced that there is more to the story. Sanchez will want to know what Marcelo has done with his dog, and there will be that big pile of disturbed dirt.

“Chango,” the third story in the collection, and another animal story, hinges on loss by death, even though that is not ostensibly

what the story is about. Bony's parents are disgusted with him because he has lost his job and sits around drinking beer instead of finding another one. One day he finds the head of a monkey under a bush in his front yard. To his parents' dismay, he refuses to get rid of the monkey head, which he has named Chango, but, instead, puts it on the front seat of his truck to ride as if it is a friend. Bony refuses to make plans for the future as his friend Mando did. Mando, whose pregnant girl friend he was planning to marry, was killed in a head-on collision in the fog while returning from delivering passengers to maquiladoras in Matamoros. The shuttle service he worked for donated \$5,000 for Mando's unborn child when he reached eighteen, but his girlfriend and family are left unprovided for. In a sense Bony replaces Mando with the monkey's head. At the end of the story, Bony drops Chango into the resaca at Lincoln Park though "It was the last thing in the world that he wanted to do."⁵ because of course Chango does not replace Mando. This is one of the most hopeful stories in the book because the last words are "but he let go."⁶ Mando will not return, but Bony can return to living again.

Two of the stories that end less happily concern the disappointment of marriage. Western culture, as Denis de Rougement makes clear in *Love in the Western World*, promises complete fulfillment in love and marriage, something our fallen world does not have to offer. De Rougement argues that the romantic love glorified in the Western world is infatuation, a longing for what one does not have, and stems from the courtly love developed in Provence in southern France in the eleventh century. With the fulfillment of marriage, the infatuation dissipates. If this satisfied longing is not replaced with affectionate regard, the lovers are doomed to disillusionment.⁷ In "Jerry Fuentes" and "Yolanda," the first-person narrators tell of losses connected with other people, not with their wives, but the real issue is the paucity of the love relationship in the marriage. Jerry Fuentes sells the narrator and his wife pre-arranged funerals that the wife wants but the narrator does not. Though the narrator suffers emotional distance from his wife

Anna, still the story ends with his making sure she is breathing as she sleeps beside him in the night. He has accommodated himself to their disagreement. Lying beside his wife Maggie, who goes to sleep before he has finished brushing his teeth, the narrator of "Yolanda" remembers when he was twelve and his sexual ideal hid in his bed after a fight with her husband. He still regrets that he did not turn around when Yolanda held him spoon fashion in that other bed. This narrator emphasizes his lack of connection with his wife by admitting that he has never told Maggie about Yolanda because "it's not something she'd appreciate knowing."⁸ He has come to terms with his lackluster marriage by dreaming of his ideal woman, an older woman who stole from her employer, was unfaithful to her husband, divorced, and married the second time when she was pregnant with a third man's baby. Though the narrator does not admit the truth to himself, Yolanda was surely not an ideal mate for anyone. He settles down to boredom and disappointment because he has asked of marriage something that it does not have to give. He longs for the sexual fulfillment he dreams he would have had with Yolanda, but, as de Rougement makes clear, romantic love is not of its very nature long lasting. These two narrators adjust to a world that does not live up to their ideals. They will live on in dullness with their wives.

The two stories that illustrate most obviously an inadequate accommodation are the first and last in the book, "Mr. Z" and "Mrs. Perez" – two of the most successful as stories. In the first story, Mr. Z badmouths eleven-year-old Diego's father. Diego wants to quit his job at a fireworks stand on the outskirts of Brownsville, but his father, not knowing the true situation, insists that Diego not be a quitter. Not wanting to give up respect for his father and unable to quit his job, Diego finds a way to avenge himself and save his self-respect by adding extra, un-paid-for, fireworks to each sack as he bags the purchases of his customers. He has his revenge against Mr. Z and feels as if he has won in the conflict, but the reader realizes that there will be a time of reckoning. Mr. Z will ultimately discover the theft and demand that Diego repay

the loss. The story ends on a high note with Diego's temporary one-upmanship, but Diego is sure to learn that revenge is not as sweet as he hoped it would be. The book's last story, "Mrs. Perez," tells of a sixty-eight-year-old woman who, after her parsimonious husband died, learned to bowl and found herself a champion. Returning home one afternoon after having her hair done in preparation for a big night in league play, she surprises a teenage thief, who leaves banana peels on the kitchen floor and urine in the commode in the bathroom before sauntering away from the helpless old woman with her bowling bag containing her expensive, engraved bowling ball. After recovering her equanimity, she finds her game has recovered, even improved with her old black bowling ball. One evening she spots the thief in a convenience store. At her challenge, he taunts her with his claim that that she can't do anything about his taking her ball as, if she calls the police, he will be gone before they arrive. Retrieving her old black ball from the car, she steps into the aisle where he stands nonchalantly reading a magazine from the rack, and then she throws a strike. The ending is most effective, and the reader has a sense of exhilaration as the protagonist defeats her opponent. However, the reader realizes at the same time that she can't break the legs of a young man she sees in a convenience store even if convinced that he stole her bowling ball. Now Lola Perez is in more trouble than the young man is. Revenge leaves a bitter aftertaste, but it is ingrained in the Mexican American culture on the banks of the Rio Grande, where Spanish language and culture remain vibrant and alive. One need only look at the popular *telenovelas*, such as *Fuego en la Sangre*, watched on both sides of the border, to see that the theme endures. Diego and Mrs. Perez have certainly achieved revenge, but at great cost not only to their opponents but also to themselves. Their grief at their loss will not be assuaged because the antagonists have suffered. They have lost and not found.

A much more satisfactory accommodation is reached in "RG," in which the narrator loses but regains the hammer he loaned his neighbor four years before. Bannert, the neighbor, forgetting

whose hammer it is, fails to return it. Not willing to stoop to ask for his favorite hammer back and unable to forgive and forget, the narrator builds up resentment against his neighbor and avoids him for four years. Finally, with Hurricane Allen threatening, RG helps his clumsy neighbor board up the windows in his house before working on his own. He begins the job using his old hammer, which finally falls apart on the job, and his neighbor goes in search of a hammer, returning with the narrator's hammer, which the neighbor considers his own. When the job is finished, the grateful neighbor gives the narrator the hammer as a token of his appreciation, never realizing the hammer actually belongs to the narrator. The narrator has his hammer back, but he has lost four years in grief over the loss of his hammer and anger against his neighbor for not returning it. The hammer is found, but the narrator will not truly feel that justice has been done. What he really wants is an acknowledgement of wrongdoing from his neighbor and an apology for the neglect and failure to return the hammer. That apology is not forthcoming. The reader cannot expect a truly good relationship to ensue even though the bitter narrator has his hammer back. The story illustrates what a small thing can create persevering hard feelings – as Cecilia Ballí says in describing the stories in *Brownsville*, “how insignificant events matter to us and even change our lives.”⁹ In some ways the return of the hammer constitutes the best accommodation in the book, but ideal justice has not been served even here.

In expecting the ideal love or perfect justice, people are doomed to disappointment. Planet Earth does not have that to offer and never has had, except in the Greek Golden Age and the Hebrew Garden of Eden. Refusing to acknowledge the fallen condition of man brings unnecessary grief and pain. There is true sorrow enough without indulging in revenge, which will never satisfy, or dreaming of a lost love, which could not have satisfied for long even if the love had been consummated. Yet there are ways out of the dilemmas proposed and only partially solved in these excellent, very human stories of the dominant culture in Brownsville,

Texas. As Lawrence Olszewski notes, "The characters may be specific to a precise locale, but the themes and situations are universal."¹⁰ Instead of expecting and yearning for a love that will satisfy one's own needs, one can be a spouse devoted to satisfying the needs of a mate. The old saying insists that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and of course it is. One can be fully satisfied with what one gives, but when receiving one never gets as much as is needed. Concentrating on one's own needs brings only disillusionment and sorrow. Revenge may look like a good idea because one is getting even, but getting even does not restore the loss. It only means that both have lost. Another's loss is not a gain to anyone. Forgiveness is a far better idea, but it is costly. To forgive is to cancel the debt owed to us, to let go of the bitterness, hatred, and resentment against someone deserving of those hard feelings. However, the bitterness doesn't hurt the person responsible for the wrong; it only destroys and embitters the days of the victim. A fantastic revenge will not restore and it will not heal. Forgiveness can clean up the debt and restore. These stories are beautifully written, poignant, and memorable. They ring true to life in Brownsville, Texas. However, there is a wisdom missing that is available to the one who will stoop to find it. The Duke of Ferrara in Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" says, "And I choose never to stoop." A wiser duke would have chosen to stoop and keep his beautiful, innocent bride. If we want a better world, we'll all need to pay the price, and it will be costly because we'll all need to do some stooping.

The University of Texas at Brownsville

Endnotes

1 Cecilia Balli, "Bard of the Border," *Texas Monthly* 31.3 (Mar. 2003), p. 102.

2 Oscar Casares, *Brownsville* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2003), p. 87.

3 Christopher B. Zenner, "The Paradox of Faith: The Irony of Despair in Casares' "Domingo" (Unpublished paper, read at Southwest Conference on Christianity and Literature, University of Texas at Brownsville, September 2005), p. 1.

4 Oscar Casares, *Brownville*, p.136.

5 Oscar Casares, *Brownville*, p. 67.

6 Oscar Casares, *Brownville*, p. 67.

7 Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, translated from the French by Montgomery Belgion from the 1954 revision of the original 1940 book (New York: Schocken, 1983), *in passim*.

8 Oscar Casares, *Brownville*, p. 157.

9 Cecilia Ballí, "Bard of the Border," p. 103.

10 Lawrence Olszewski, "Brownville by Oscar Casares," *Library Journal* 128.3 (2 February 2003), p. 171.

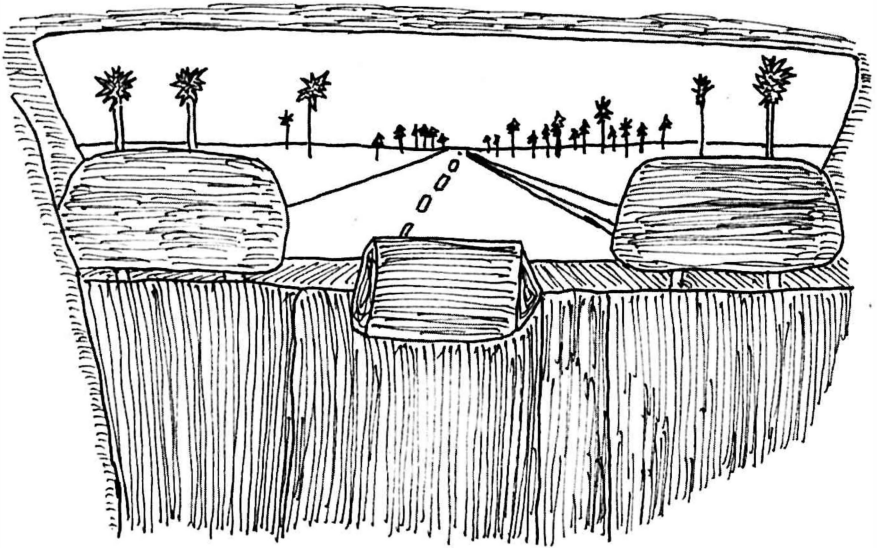
Leaving the Valley

How many summers did we see, did we breathe
those years under wide frontier skies?
Albums of memories, could you, would you
capture some glimmering time fireflies?

Resacas ruminating around desert tropics.
In each breeze, palm trees clapping their fronds
for toddlers, then teens, in parks, then cars,
singing nursery tunes, then high school songs.

Parades celebrating thirty-six Charro Days.
Good friends loading our moving van,
we salute you, greet you from not very far,
and for your happiness always pray.

– *Vivian Kearney*





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