

1. **Belén Galindo** Trovadores Norteños
2. **Asalto de Zamora** Los Cancioneros del Bajío
3. **La Llegua y la Potranca** Los Desveladores
4. **Kilómetro 1160** Los Norteños de Terán
5. **Ezequiel Rodríguez** El Palomo y El Gorrión
6. **Ezequiel Rodríguez** Meme y Lupe Cardenas
7. **Aventuras del West** Timoteo Cantú y Jesús Villa
8. **El Güero Candelario** Juanita y María Mendoza
9. **Mujer Paseada** Los 3 Reyes
10. **Contestación a Mujer Paseada** Juanita y María Mendoza
11. **El Matón de San Antonio** Gaytán y Cantú
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20. **Corrido de Martin Luther King**
Gregorio y María
21. **Las Crescientes de Beulah** Gilberto Pérez
22. **Rinches de Texas** Duetto Reynosa

Transcriptions and translations of all the corridos are found embedded in the CD and can be accessed through your computer.

Edited by Prof. James Nicolopoulos and Chris Strachwitz

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These narrative ballads from both sides of the Texas-Mexico border were recorded between 1949 and 1975. And the subjects range from immigration, social and intercultural conflicts, civil rights, interpersonal relations, and labor strikes, to the assassinations of President J.F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, the Saga of Patty Hearst, smuggling, disasters and more.



Ballads & Corridos

(1949 – 1975)

These narrative ballads from both sides of the Texas-Mexico border were recorded in south Texas and Monterrey, Mexico between 1949 and 1975 by local recording firms, primarily IDEAL and FALCON. The topics range from immigration, social and intercultural conflicts, civil rights, interpersonal relations, and labor strikes, to the assassinations of President J.F Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, the Saga of Patty Hearst, smuggling, disasters and more. Some of the subjects topics however, precede this era.

1. Belén Galindo (Valdez – Gutiérrez)

Trovadores Norteños (con Conjunto de Tony de la Rosa)
(ID 868A – recorded May 1953)

2. Asalto de Zamora (PD)

Los Cancioneros del Bajío (Matilde y Miguel)
(ID 747B – recorded April 1952)

3. La Llegua y la Potranca (Juan Salinas)

Los Desveladores (Agapito-Juan-Chepe Rafael)
(ID 1366B – recorded August 1956)

4. Kilómetro 1160 (Salomé Gutiérrez)

Los Norteños de Terán
(ID 1790A – recorded April 1960)

5. Ezequiel Rodríguez (PD)

El Palomo y El Gorrión (Cirilo y Miguel Luna Franco)
(Fal – recorded in Monterrey – late 1950s)

6. Ezequiel Rodríguez (PD)

Meme y Lupe (con Los Hermanos Cárdenas)
(Fal A-079, F-1175 – recorded 7/6/1950)

7. Aventuras del West (Paulo Alonzo)

Timoteo Cantú (El Azote de Laredo) y Jesús Villa
(ID 687A – recorded 12/28/1951)

8. El Güero Candelario (M.C. Valdez)

Juanita y María Mendoza (con Conjunto de Valerio Longoria)
(ID 650B – recorded 9/20/1951)

9. Mujer Paseada (Daniel Garcés)

Los 3 Reyes (vocal by Daniel Garcés)
(Fal A-469, F-1925 – recorded December 1954)

10. Contestación a Mujer Paseada (Garcés & Valdez)

Juanita (lead vocal) y María Mendoza (con Conjunto de Ruco Villareal)
(Rio 341 – recorded May 26, 1955)

11. El Matón de San Antonio (Juan Gaytán)

Gaytán y Cantú (con Conjunto Ideal with Narciso Martinez – accordion)
(ID 373A – recorded 10/17/1949)

12. El Mojado (PD)

Timoteo Cantú y Jesús Maya
(ID 259B – recorded 1/14/1949)

13. Corrido de Ismael Ramos (Mario Camacho)

Los Bravos de Matamoros (vocal by Ernesto Ramírez y Antonio Lozano)
(ID 1796B – recorded June 1960)

14. Corrido de Chessman (A. Muriel & Edo. Gutiérrez)

Valerio Longoria (y su Conjunto)
(ID 1795A – recorded June 1960)

- 15. Lamento a Kennedy** (Gilberto López)
Gilberto López (y su Conjunto with vocal by Gilberto y Pepe)
(ID 2140 – recorded February 1964)
- 16. Los Derechos Civiles** (Tony Ramírez)
Los Oros del Valle (vocal by María Alicia Hernández)
(ID 2438 – recorded in 1968)
- 17. Homenaje a J. F. Kennedy** (José Morante)
Los Conquistadores (vocal by Morante y Agustín con Los Arcos)
(NO 221 – recorded ca. early 1964)
- 18. Recordando al Presidente** (Willie López & Ramiro Cavazos)
Los Canarios del Valle (vocal by Sánchez y Cantú)
(OR 151 – recorded ca. early 1964)
- 19. Corrido de Patricia Hearst** (Arnaldo & Rafael Ramírez)
Los Magníficos (vocal by Los del Bajío)
(Fal 2080, R-2711 – recorded October 1975)
- 20. Corrido de Martin Luther King** (Rafael Ramírez)
Gregorio y María (accordion by Eugenio Abrego)
(Fal 1750, F-5924 – recorded April 8, 1968)
- 21. Las Crescentes de Beulah** (Pérez, Garza & González)
Gilberto Pérez (y sus Compadres)
(CH-118 – recorded ca. late 1967)
- 22. Rinches de Texas** (Willie López)
Dueto Reynosa
(OR 230 – recorded ca. 1967)

Transcriptions and translations of all the corridos are found embedded in the CD and can be accessed through your computer.

1. BELÉN GALINDO (Valdez – Gutiérrez)

The corrido "Belén Galindo" (called in some variants "María Belén") is the most widely known Mexican ballad on the theme of the "evil mother-in-law," or what Prof. María Herrera-Sobek calls one aspect of the "Cruel Mother" archetype in world folklore. It was long thought by many scholars to have originated in a Mexico City printed broadside. However, the tireless field work of the outstanding but often overlooked scholar Cuauhtémoc Esparza Sánchez has revealed that this corrido is based on real events that occurred during the 1880s in Nieves, Zacatecas. A certain Hipólito Mendoza married a young woman named Belén (Spanish for "Bethlehem"), but not long after their nuptials (Esparza includes a photo of the couple in his rare but valuable study *El corrido zacatecano*), Hipólito's mother incited her son with false accusations of her daughter-in-law's supposed infidelities. Following the customs of the time, Hipólito saw no other option but to "cleans" the family's honor with the blood of his unfortunate bride.

According to the much longer version of this corrido collected by Esparza Sánchez in Nieves, the real motive for the mother-in-law's perfidy was that Belén refused to prostitute herself to a local magnate who had sought out the "evil" mother-in-law's services as a procuress. A local musician in Nieves, Román Colón, is said to have composed the "original" version of this ballad in 1883.

2. ASALTO DE ZAMORA (PD)

Although Pedro Zamora was one of the lesser-known regional figures who flourished during the Revolution, he seems to have achieved almost mythic status in his home region of Jalisco and the neighboring state of Colima. Two corridos concerning battles in which he engaged with Federal forces were collected and published by Vicente T. Mendoza in 1939. The celebrated twentieth-century writer, Juan Rulfo (1918-1986), affirms that he often heard old men singing corridos about Zamora and his exploits as he was growing up in the Talpa region of Jalisco. The two that he quotes and uses to build the plot of the

tale that gives its title to his famous collection of short stories, *El llano en llamas* (The Burning Plain, 1953), are the same two ballads collected by Mendoza ("La perra valiente" and "De Orlachía"). According to Mendoza, "De Orlachía" concerns events of 1913. That Zamora was still active into the 1920s is a testimony to his skill and tenacity as a guerrilla warrior. Zamora always insisted that he was a follower of Pancho Villa, although by the 1920s, when Villa had made peace with the government and villismo per se was no longer a viable political cause, most people took this as a cynical and transparent cover for outright banditry. In the "Asalto de Zamora" as heard here, besides the dramatic derailment and burning of the train, the main focus is on the kidnapping, rape, and possibly, the subsequent abandonment or murder of the more attractive women taken as part of the "booty" gained in the assault. This aspect of Zamora's gang is brought to the forefront in Rulfo's short story, as well. The only "softening" of this reprehensible behavior is that the main victim, who engages in dialogue with Zamora, is depicted as a

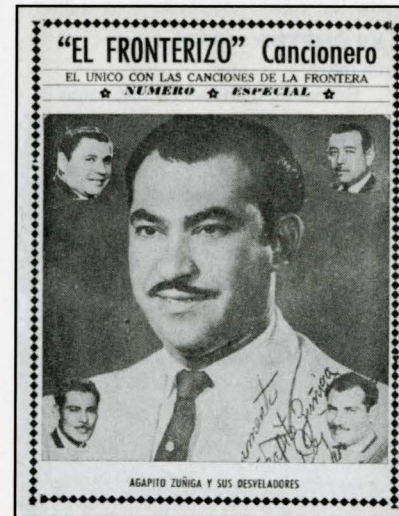
gachupín, or Peninsular Spaniard, almost universally detested by the lower classes in Mexico, and thus a fitting victim. The closing remark of the narrative voice "Now I'm leaving for Sonora" is especially significant given the political situation of the 1920s. It is also interesting that this corrido was performed by Los Cancioneros del Bajío, who seem to have enriched the Border repertoire of both Ideal and Falcon Records with a considerable amount of authentic material from central Mexico.

3. LA LLEGUA Y LA POTRANCA (Juan Salinas)

Mexican style horse racing (two horses at a time down a straight one-quarter-mile track) and famous race-horses have long been, and continue to be, staples of material for corridos. This race apparently took place in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, the sister city across the Rio Grande from Laredo, Tx. The tracks may be quite improvised—we were shown a dirt airstrip in San Carlos, Chih., where it was said that horse races were held on festive occasions. Horse race ballads generally fall into two major



(2) Matilde y Miguel



(3) Agapito Zuniga y Los Desveladores

classes: a) those that concentrate on the qualities of and competition between the horses themselves; b) those that focus more on the rivalries between owners and/or bettors—often resulting in violent death. The corrido we present here is of the first type, although the betting aspect is not entirely absent.

4. KILÓMETRO 1160 (Salomé Gutiérrez)

Sometimes known by the name of the protagonist, Arturo Garza Treviño, this ballad about the death of a small-time gangster in a single-car wreck has remained remarkably popular along the border, and in the corrido repertoire in general. Salomé Gutiérrez of the San Antonio Music Company once told me that shortly after Garza Treviño's death, one of the dead man's sisters approached him and offered him \$200.00 to write a fitting corrido commemorating the demise of her brother. Be that as it may, the corrido has long outlived the memory of its protagonist, and thus many singers—who learn their material orally—confuse the verse which says "por la 'lepra' conocido" for "por su

'letra' conocido," ignorant of the fact that his underworld moniker was "la lepra" (the "leper" or "leprosy"—just as some call themselves "la fiebre" or "deadly fever" in order to indicate how dangerous they can be).

5. EZEQUIEL RODRÍGUEZ (PD) (original version)

This corrido is based on real events that apparently occurred in 1941, as stated in the first stanza. The murder that took place at the dance that fateful night was but one bloody incident in a conflict that had been rending apart the Mexican countryside for decades, but which reached its climax during the presidency of Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40). Alone of all the post-Revolutionary presidents, Cárdenas made a serious and systematic effort to implement a meaningful land-reform program throughout the country. In many rural areas, including south eastern Nuevo León, one result was a violent struggle between militant agraristas and well-armed gangs of pistoleros (gun-slingers) employed by the wealthy landowners to prevent the takeover of



(5) El Palomo y El Gorrión



The first recording of EZEQUIEL RODRÍGUEZ

their haciendas (large estates) and the distribution of the land to the peasants who worked upon it. The protagonist of this ballad, Ezequiel Rodríguez, was said to be a relative of one such landowner, and the most feared gunman in a gang headed by a ruthless killer known as Atadeo.

The variant performed here by El Palomo y el Gorrión may be considered the "original," at least in the sense that it is substantially the same as the first known recording of this corrido—made by the duet of Maldonado y Ortiz with accordion by Eugenio Abrego (one of the nascent avatars of the most famous conjunto norteño of all, Los Alegres de Terán) for the ephemeral Orfeo label in Monterrey sometime in the late 1940s. Miguel and Cirilo Luna Franco (El Palomo y el Gorrión), although scarcely born when that first recording was made, grew up in the mountains to the south of Linares and Morelos, NL, and, even as underaged musicians, played extensively in the cantinas and redlight districts of both towns. Judging from the number of recordings (31 in the Arhoolie Foundation Frontera Collection at pres-

ent—with the exception of one by Los Donneños released on a major label LP) -- all released by small, independent regional labels, this corrido documenting the local manifestation of the national struggle over land reform became a fundamental item in the local repertoire, and through the recordings, was spread out across the "corrido community" on a national basis. Some people even say that it should be called the "Corrido de Anselmo García" because Rodríguez is portrayed in a negative light, and when Anselmo shoots him down in a "fair" fight, all the people cry out "Viva Anselmo García." Nonetheless, the final stanzas make it clear that the ballad is dedicated to the death of Rodríguez despite his faults.

6. EZEQUIEL RODRÍGUEZ (PD) (second version)

This variant performed by Memo y Lupe Cárdenas is less openly in favor of García, although it does not go to the extreme of "El nuevo corrido de Ezequiel Rodríguez" performed a few years later for Falcon by Los Alegres de Terán, in



(6) EZEQUIEL RODRÍGUEZ



(8) Juanita and María Mendoza

which García is called a "coward," and which unapologetically laments the death of "Ezequiel /of Atadeo's men the very best," and the date is moved back to 1939 (this can be heard on Arhoolie CD 9048). "Chencho" Cárdenas (the only surviving member of the group which made the present recording—also first issued on Falcon) told me that they had learned it from the husband of the school teacher who gave them elementary classes in the ejido (a communal farm based on pre-Hispanic models used to replace large private estates during the land reform) where he and his brothers were born and raised. Although the ejido on which they were raised was quite near the border, along the highway and railroad line that runs between Matamoros and Reynosa, Tamps., the teacher and her husband were from the Montemorelos region in Nuevo León, where they had learned this version of the corrido of "Ezequiel Rodríguez."

7. AVENTURAS DEL WEST (Paulo Alonzo)

There is some discussion over

whether the "West" of the title refers to the small town of that name—a little north of Waco on what is now I-35, and definitely in a part of Central Texas heavily settled by Germans and other Central Europeans—or whether it refers more generally to West Texas, which during the years before the widespread introduction of cotton harvesting machinery used to attract thousands of migrant workers during the harvest season. Apparently, not only entire extended families, but whole neighborhoods in south and south central Texas would pack up and make the trek to the cotton fields. A number of musicians active during those years—Lydia Mendoza and the Mendoza sisters Juanita & María, Valerio Longoria, etc.—have told us how the musicians would follow the workers and make their own rich harvest, playing at dances and beer joints for the field workers with newly acquired cash "burning holes" in their pockets. All the informants also attested to the flagrant discrimination that Mexicans suffered on these journeys and in the cotton lands themselves. There are many corridos on the subject, some dating back to the

1920s, but this piece is more typical of the post-war Texas labels during those boom years that attracted not only immigrant workers, but some eventually famous musicians as well, to ultimately settle in Texas.

8. EL GÜERO CANDELARIO (M.C. Valdez)

There are many ballads in the Mexican & Mexican American repertoires that relate the perils an attractive woman can encounter by attending a dance unescorted. The most famous, perhaps, is "Rosita Álvarez" where the protagonist pays with her life for ignoring her mother's advice. This song, written by the "Bohemian" Manuel C. Valdez, a well known songwriter in San Antonio, is an interesting variant, in that the woman stands up for her honor, and her constancy is rewarded by the timely arrival and intervention of her husband. As the final, farewell stanza states: "How fine are the men / who know how to defend themselves / and who defend with their lives / the honor of their wife!"

9. MUJER PASEADA (Daniel Garcés)

This song and the following "answer" demonstrate that not all "topical" songs necessarily take the form of ballads. Daniel Garcés, the author of "Mujer paseada" (one of his many hit tunes) was more known as an author/composer than a performer, although he is heard here with his group, Los Tres Reyes. Garcés lived with Juanita Mendoza (she always referred to him as "my husband") and fathered two children with her. According to Lydia (Juanita's older sister), Garcés repeatedly promised to marry Juanita, but never did so because his previous marriage had not been legally dissolved. This was not, however, the major cause of the discord between the two. The couple began performing together after the death of Leonor Mendoza (matriarch of the clan) in 1952, but Juanita—who had become accustomed to handling her own earnings as one of the duet Las Hermanas Mendoza—deeply resented Garcés' insistence on receiving and managing all of the money they were paid for their work together. Things became quite heated, and when he walked out on her, Garcés wrote and



(9) Los 3 Reyes



(10) Juanita Mendoza

recorded the following song as his "despedida" or public statement justifying the break-up. The unintelligible words at the end of the "grito" following stanza 4 were probably muffled by Garcés on purpose—as it is, one can hear the anger in his voice.

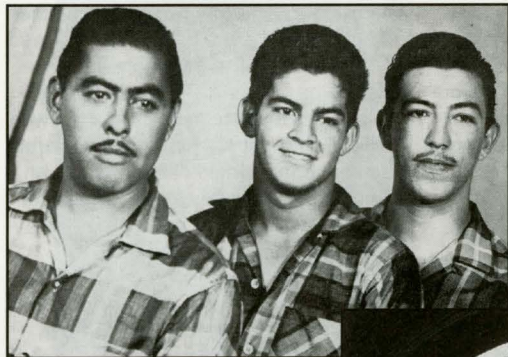
10. CONTESTACIÓN A MUJER PASEADA (Garcés & Valdez)

Juanita and most of her family were at the time deeply offended by Garcés' song, especially given the connotations of "mujer paseada" in the Mexican American community. I believe it was Juanita's older brother Manuel who told Chris Strachwitz that he felt obliged to take action to defend his sister's "honor." Apparently he went to another of San Antonio's most renowned singer/songwriters of the time, Manuel C. Valdez, and asked him to compose this "answer" to "Mujer Paseada." Juanita enlisted her sister María, and the old duo of Las Hermanas Mendoza went to the small local label, Río Records, and recorded the only disc they ever made for Mr. Hymie Wolf's operation. Although Juanita spoke with pride about Garcés'

status as a "hit" composer, and as father of her beloved children when interviewed in the 1980s, the tension between her and Garcés was well-known in the community. It was even an issue at what was apparently the first time they had shared a stage together since the 1950s, at an Homenaje for Lydia held at Our Lady of the Lake University in the early 1990s. Curiously, although Lydia recorded "Mujer paseada" a number of times, she never did record the "Contestación." In any case, Valdez can be credited with authoring one of the most powerful statements of female independence and agency to be found in the entire corpus of Mexican and Mexican American Music. Although esthetically more pleasing versions exist (I strongly recommend that by Las Hermanas Segovia—also recorded for Falcon—that can be heard on Arhoolie CD 486), there is a real power in Juanita's own, personal response to the calumnies directed at her by her former lover.

11. EL MATÓN DE SAN ANTONIO (Juan Gaytán)

Vicente T. Mendoza, in his cata-



(14) Valerio Longoria y su conjunto



logue of "legitimate" types of corridos, includes the so-called "corrido de jactancia" or "macho" boasting type of song, usually presented in the first person.

The following ballad is of this kind, written in this case by Juan Gaytán—one of the select group of top singer/songwriters along with Manuel C. Valdez, Daniel Garcés, Salomé Gutiérrez, and many would say, José Morante, who dominated the San Antonio scene during the 1940s and 1950s. Like other "boasting" ballads of this era, especially those of Valdez, the author uses a fair amount of so-called "pachuco" slang to give the song more "authenticity."

12. EL MOJADO (PD)

The plight of the "undocumented" immigrant has been a favorite theme since the imposition of stricter border controls during the 1920s, and continues to thrive today. The following is one of the most eloquent of those recorded for Ideal Records by the pioneering duet of Cantú y Maya. The melody is the same as a song by the same title recorded in 1934 by Juan Gaytán, Francisco Cantú and Rodríguez, but the lyrics have been changed after the first verse!

13. CORRIDO DE ISMAEL RAMOS (Mario Camacho)

This is a topical ballad about a politically motivated murder that actually occurred. I have not yet been able to discover the exact details.

14. CORRIDO DE CHESSMAN (A. Muriel & Edo. Gutiérrez)

Caryl Chessman was convicted in California of multiple counts of kidnapping, rape, and robbery during the 1950s. According to California law at the time, any crime involving kidnapping was punishable by death. The case was quite controversial and gained worldwide notoriety as a test case for those who opposed capital punishment. Chessman was ultimately executed in the gas chamber at San Quentin Prison on May 2, 1960. The following corrido demonstrates that Texas-based corridistas were not limited to regional themes. On the contrary, they were also swift to exploit events of national notoriety and significance.

15. LAMENTO A KENNEDY (Gilberto)



(15) Gilberto López



(17) Los Conquistadores with José Morante (lower right)

López)

This is one of some twenty corridos about the JFK assassination that Dan William Dickey collected from a variety of sources and published in his book *The Kennedy Corridos: A study of the Ballads of a Mexican American Hero* (Austin: UTP, CMAS Monograph No.4, 1978). Both President Kennedy and his brother Robert were greatly admired in life and genuinely lamented in death by Mexicans on both sides of the border. Due to limitations of space, we have not included any of the RFK corridos in this collection.

16. LOS DERECHOS CIVILES (Tony Ramírez)

I have not yet been able to identify the federal agent or lawyer mentioned in this song. It is clear that the song was written and recorded as part of a publicity campaign during the years immediately after the signing of the Civil Rights Act in order to reach a Spanish-speaking public that may not have had many other sources of information about their access to legal redress for violations of their civil rights.

17. HOMENAJE A J.F. KENNEDY

(José Morante)

This is yet another of the corridos about the JFK assassination that Dan William Dickey collected from a variety of sources and published in his book *The Kennedy Corridos: A study of the Ballads of a Mexican American Hero* (Austin: UTP, CMAS Monograph No.4, 1978).

18. RECORDANDO AL PRESIDENTE

(Willie López)

This is the third and last of the twenty some corridos about the JFK assassination that we felt had to be included in this collection. Again, Dan William Dickey collected these from a variety of sources and published them in his book *The Kennedy Corridos: A study of the Ballads of a Mexican American Hero* (Austin: UTP, CMAS Monograph No.4, 1978).

19. CORRIDO DE PATRICIA HEARST

(Arnaldo & Rafael Ramírez)

The kidnapping of the newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst from her apart-

ment near UC Berkeley (where she was a student) on February 4, 1974 was seen at first primarily as a local matter. Nonetheless, the previously little-known group responsible, calling itself by the bizarre name of "Symbionese Liberation Army" or "SLA," had already proved it was capable of senseless violence by the murder of Oakland, CA schools Superintendent Marcus Foster. National, and even international, public interest was raised to fever pitch, however, after the kidnap victim issued a statement that she was joining her captors (April 3, 1974). She was recorded on a bank security video camera wielding an assault rifle—an image that was widely disseminated—and was a topic of intense public interest until her capture in September 1975. Her image was so powerful that Rafael and Arnaldo Ramírez of Discos Falcón in McAllen, TX put out an entire LP devoted to songs and dialogs concerning Ms. Hearst's brief career as a revolutionary. We have included the "short" version of a corrido designed for release as a 45. Antonio Avitia Hernández documents at least one other corrido on the subject, which was

recorded in Mexico City.

20. CORRIDO DE MARTIN LUTHER KING (Rafael Ramírez)

As in the cases of JFK and RFK, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in Memphis, TN on April 4, 1968 was viewed as an immense tragedy, both personally and for the cause of civil rights for all races and ethnic groups. The following corrido, which was recorded only four days later, is a good example of the response of the Mexican American community.

21. LAS CRESCIENTES DE BEULAH (Pérez-Garza-González)

Hurricane Beulah thrust a devastating path through the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, finally hitting land very near the mouth of the Río Grande in September 1967. Following closely on the heels of another storm, the major damage was caused by the backed-up flood stages of the great river itself. Hurricanes are a staple of corrido material in the region, but Beulah is still remembered as one of the worst.



22. RINCHES DE TEXAS (Willie López)

The Starr County melon strike (1966-67) was one of the first attempts by Texas farmworkers to emulate the successful strategies of the UFW under the leadership of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in California. The growers who opposed them represented the first massive scale agribusiness conglomerate in Texas, also based on a California model. The UFW sent a small contingent of experienced organizers to help the Texas workers, but Gov. John Connally of Texas favored the growers, and sent in the feared and despised Texas Rangers ("los rinches" of the title) with orders to stop at nothing to break the strike. The most notorious incident occurred in June 1967 when several carloads of Rangers followed two of the "outside" organizers (who are mentioned by name in the corrido) back to the local residence where they were staying. The Rangers forced their way into the house without a warrant, and beat the two men almost to death. A hospital emergency crew testified later that they had never before seen men so badly beaten and still survive. The strike itself failed, but

the corrido spread all across Texas and is credited with being a major factor in energizing the Chicano Movement in the state.



(22) RINCHES DE TEXAS



(21) Gilberto Pérez

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All lyrics verified, transcribed and translated collaboratively by James Nicolopoulos, René Carrasco, F. Forrest Maldonado, and Velerie B. Maldonado.

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