

# LOS Pingüinos del Norte

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**Rubén Castillo Juárez** – vocals  
& accordion

**Hilario Gaytán Moreno** – vocals  
& guitar

**Ricardo Escalante** – bass  
& vocal on # 13 with Hilario

**Rumel Fuentes** – my guide, gritos &  
vocal on # 8 with Ruben

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz with 2 - EV RE-15 microphones with a Magnacord 2 track recorder at "El Patio" cantina in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico on May 7, 1970; except # 10 recorded by Mike McClellan, and #s 11 & 12 which were recorded by Chris Strachwitz with one mic during the filming of "Chulas Fronteras" with cinematographer, Les Blank in January 1975.

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## Corridos de la Frontera



# LOS Pingüinos del Norte



## Corridos de la Frontera





**L**os Pingüinos Del Norte (The Penguins of the North) are typical of the thousands of strolling groups (*conjuntos*) found all over Mexico in cantinas, on the streets, in the plazas, at parties, etc. The music played will vary from region to region depending upon the tradition in that area. In northeastern Mexico, along the Texas-Mexico border, most *conjuntos* play *música norteña*, which as the name implies is music from the north. Over the past 50 years this has come to mean accordion music.

Los Pingüinos are very special because they have been supplying the music in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, for over 50 years. In their authentic, rural style they sing many *corridos* (narrative ballads or story songs) popular in that region. Heard here are mostly older corridos from the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which almost without exception tell the real story of events, although from the perspective of the local population. Of course Los Pingüinos sing and play almost any song or tune requested because that is how they make their living. The singers are living juke boxes, and patrons in the cantinas pay them by the

song. At the time I made these recordings the price was 50 cents per song or 6 pesos. Today I think the charge has risen to \$2 or \$5 per song. One customer will often request dozens of songs until his last dollar is spent. Let the late Rumel Fuentes, who grew up in Eagle Pass, Texas, and who helped me make these recordings, speak about this music from personal experience:

“The music heard on this record, especially the corridos, is the music of the lower economic classes. The people who listen to this type of music are the laborers and farm workers. This music deals with people who are liberal, individualistic, arrogant, and who have no fear of death and their motto is: ‘If I don’t fear death, how can I fear life?’ Seldom is this music heard in middle class or upper class Mexican or Mexican-American homes.

The social phenomenon of the corrido involves the heroes about whom the song is written, the writer, and of course the public who will listen to the corrido. In most cases all three groups belong to the same social class and they have little to be proud of as far as economic affluence is concerned and so their pride is expressed

through courage and honor. In many cases the heroes of the corridos pay for their impudence and rebelliousness with their lives thus making the hero braver and the song greater. The more beer or tequila one drinks in the cantina, the braver one feels and the more one can identify with the hero of the song. The bravery is sometimes expressed by yells and *gritos* showing approval of the content of the corrido or sometimes by fights which are frequent occurrences in the cantinas. The corrido also helps to understand the beliefs, standards, and culture of the people and is a living witness to the sentiments and values of La Raza.”

As of the date of this re-write, Los Pingüinos del Norte are still actively serenading in Piedras Negras after a brief retirement. Now in his 54<sup>th</sup> year of supplying music in his community, leader of the conjunto, Rubén Castillo is however the only original member left. He has recently hired Raúl Torres, the energetic string bass player who used to play with *Los Alacranes de Durango* (note Arhoolie CD 9023 – En Vivo! En Piedras Negras, Coah.). Hilario Gaytán, the guitar

player on this recording quit music many years ago but was one of the founders of the dueto. The most recent bajo sexto player and second voice has been Antonio Pérez Rodríguez (who can be heard on Arhoolie CD # 9024 – Los Pingüinos Del Norte, *Trovadores de la Frontera*). The conjunto as heard on this disc is also seen in the award winning film/video/DVD about Texas-Mexican border music: CHULAS FRONTERAS by Les Blank and Chris Strachwitz (Brazos Films DVD # BF-104) which also features Los Alegres De Terán, Flaco Jiménez, Lydia Mendoza, Narciso Martínez, Santiago Jiménez, and many others. The DVD also includes the film “Del Mero Corazón” and an additional 30 minutes of previously unreleased songs and footage of the musicians! Two solid hours of great music for only \$ 25.00 plus postage or check our web site: [www.arhoolie.com](http://www.arhoolie.com)

– Chris Strachwitz, May 23, 2005

**Note:** space does not permit background information on these corridos but a forthcoming book by Prof. James Nicolopoulos will deal with many of these ballads.

1

Yo ya estoy desesperado;  
¡ay de tanto trabajar  
y andar pizcando naranjas,  
ya me voy a enaranjar!

Me vine de Piedras Negras  
muy chiflado y muy contento,  
y le dije a mi viejita:  
-No te apures, pronto vuelvo.

Hemos pasado Louisiana.  
Alabama y otros más;  
le pregunto yo al Coral:  
- ¿Cuánto falta pa' llegar?

Me contesta el Catarrín:  
-No te vayas a agüitar,  
no te apures, camarada,  
que el sancho se va a rayar.

Al decir estas palabras,  
nos pusimos a pensar,  
y le dije yo a Ramón:  
-Cómo ves esta caray?

Con nosotros iba Armando,  
con el Flaco y otros más,  
hasta el dueto Los Pingüinos  
que empezaron a cantar.

Al cantar esas canciones,  
yo me pongo a recordar:  
¡Ay mi amado Piedras Negras!  
cuándo habré de regresar?

Now I'm really desperate;  
ay, from working so hard  
and going around picking oranges,  
now I'm going to turn orange!

I came out from Piedras Negras  
very foolish and very happy,  
and I told my old lady:  
"Don't worry, I'll be back soon."

We've passed through Louisiana,  
Alabama and some other states;  
I ask El Coral:  
"How much more 'til we get there?"

Catarrín answers me:  
"Don't get all shook up,  
don't worry, buddy; lover boy  
is going to really make out."

Having said these words,  
we all fell to thinking,  
and I said to Ramón:  
What do you think of this damn mess?

Armando was riding with us,  
along with El Flaco and some others,  
even the duet Los Pingüinos,  
who began to sing.

As I sing these songs,  
I start to remember:  
"Ay, my beloved Piedras Negras!  
When will I ever get back?"

Son mil ochocientas millas,  
ni les quiero recordar,  
y hasta que no llegue a Piedras,  
del carro no he de bajar.

Ya con ésta me despido,  
Diosito me ha de ayudar;  
voy corriendo las cien millas,  
pues pronto quiero llegar.

## GREGORIO CORTÉZ

En el condado del Carmen,  
miren lo que ha sucedido,  
murió el Cherife Major  
quedando Román herido.

Anduvieron informando  
como tres horas después,  
supieron que el malhechor  
era Gregorio Cortéz.

Decía Gregorio Cortéz  
con su pistola en la mano:  
-No siento haberlo matado,  
al que siento es a mi hermano.

Decía Gregorio Cortéz  
con su alma muy encendida:  
-No siento haberlo matado,  
la defensa es permitida.

Iban los americanos,  
que por el viento volaban,  
porque se iban a ganar  
diez mil pesos que les daban.

It's 1,800 miles,  
I don't even want to remind you,  
and until I get back to Piedras  
I won't even get out of this car.

With this I bid farewell,  
my dear God will surely help me;  
I'm doing a hundred miles an hour,  
I really want to get home soon.

## GREGORIO CORTÉZ

In the county of El Carmen,  
look at what has happened,  
the High Sheriff died  
leaving Román wounded.

They went around asking questions  
about three hours later;  
they found out that the wrongdoer  
was Gregorio Cortéz.

Gregorio Cortéz was saying  
with his pistol in his hand:  
"I don't regret having killed him,  
the one I'm sorry about is my brother."

Gregorio Cortéz was saying  
with his soul all ablaze:  
"I don't regret having killed him,  
self-defense is permitted."

The Americans were riding,  
they were flying down the wind,  
because they were trying to earn  
the 10,000 dollars they would be given.

2



Al llegar al Encinal  
lo alcanzaron a rodear  
poquito más de trescientos-,  
allí les brincó el corral.

Le echaron los perros jaunes  
que iban detrás de la huella,  
pero alcanzar a Cortéz  
era alcanzar a una estrella.

Decía Gregorio Cortéz:  
- ¿Pa' qué se valen de planes,  
si no me pueden pescar  
ni con esos perros jaunes?

Gregorio le dice a Juan:  
-Muy pronto lo vas a ver;  
anda, dile a los cherifes  
que me vengan a aprehender.

-Dicen que por culpa mía  
se ha matado a mucha gente;  
yo me voy a presentar  
porque esto no es conveniente.

Pues ya Gregorio murió,  
ya terminó la cuestión;  
la pobre de su familia  
lo llevan en el corazón.

On arriving in Encinal  
they succeeded in surrounding him,  
just a few more than 300 of them;  
there he jumped out of their corral.

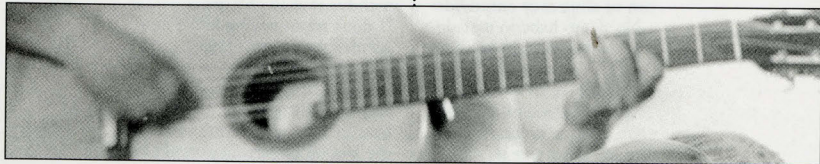
They loosed the hound dogs on him  
that were tracking his trail,  
but catching up with Cortéz  
was like catching up with a star.

Gregorio Cortéz was saying:  
"What's the use of all your scheming  
if you can't even find me,  
not even with these hound dogs?"

Gregorio tells Juan:  
"Very soon you will see it;  
go and tell the sheriffs  
to come and arrest me."

"They say it's my fault  
that many people have been killed;  
I'm going to turn myself in  
because this isn't right."

Well Gregorio is already dead,  
now the matter is finished;  
his poor family  
carries him in their hearts.



*(Se repiten el primer y el tercer verso de cada estrofa)*

*Hablado:* Ahora vamos a cantar  
un mentado corrido,  
también de la Revolución,  
de aquí de México: "Benjamín Argumedo".

Para empezar a cantar  
pido permiso primero;  
señores, son las mañanas  
de Benjamín Argumedo.

Doy detalle en realidad,  
que fue el veintiocho de enero;  
aprehendieron a Alaníz  
y a Benjamín Argumedo.

Echaron a Benjamín  
en un carro como flete;  
pasaron por San Miguel,  
llegaron a Sombrerete.

Cuando Argumedo sanó,  
que se le llegó su día;  
lo fueron a presentar  
con el general Murguía.

"Oiga Ud., mi general,  
yo también fui hombre valiente;  
quiero que Ud. me afusile  
en presencia de la gente".

Luego que Argumedo vio  
que no se le concedía,  
él no demostraba miedo,  
antes mejor se sonreía.

*(The first and third lines of each stanza are repeated)*

*Spoken:* Now we're going to sing  
a famous corrido,  
also from the Revolution,  
from here in Mexico: "Benjamín Argumedo."

To begin singing  
I first ask permission;  
gentlemen, this is the ballad  
of Benjamín Argumedo.

This is exactly what happened,  
it was the 28th of January;  
they captured Alaníz  
and Benjamín Argumedo.

They threw Benjamín  
into a ox cart like freight;  
they passed through San Miguel,  
they arrived in Sombrerete.

When Argumedo got well,  
the fatal day arrived;  
they took him to be presented  
before General Murguía.

"Listen, my general,  
I too have been a brave man;  
I want you to have me shot  
in the presence of all the people."

When Argumedo saw  
that his request would not be  
granted, he showed no fear,  
better yet, he was smiling.



Ya con ésta me despido  
porque cantar ya no puedo;  
señores, son las mañanas  
de Benjamín Argumedo.

Now with this I bid farewell  
because I can sing no more;  
gentlemen, this is the ballad  
of Benjamín Argumedo.

#### YO SOY NORTEÑO

#### I'M A NORTHERNER

4

Yo soy norteño del mero norte,  
yo soy dueño de mi dolor,  
ya tengo listo mi pasaporte,  
ya siento libre en mi corazón.

I am a northerner from the real North,  
I'm master of my sorrow;  
now my passport is ready,  
now I feel free in my heart.

Con eso tengo pa' desterrarme,  
porque no quiero jamás volver,  
si por borracho me despreciaste,  
yo por calumnia no te dejé.

With this I have enough to exile myself,  
because I never want to return;  
if you scorned me for being a drunkard,  
I didn't leave you because of slander.

Por los pueblitos me voy cantando,  
me voy buscando a otro querer,  
un amorcito que no sea malo,  
asi quitarme del padecer.

I leave singing through the little towns,  
I leave searching for a new love,  
a little lover who isn't cruel-hearted,  
to get rid of my suffering.

Destino ingrato, te estás volteando,  
tal vez un día recordarás,  
pero hombre entonces muy diferente,  
porque la suerte me cambiará,

Cruel fortune, your wheel is turning over  
maybe someday you will remember,  
but then I'll be a different man,  
because my luck will change.

Yo me despido, quizás paciente,  
tal vez un día recordarás,  
pero hombre entonces muy diferente,  
porque la suerte me cambiará.

I bid farewell, perhaps patiently,  
maybe someday you will remember,  
but then I'll be a different man,  
because my luck will change.

Por los pueblitos me voy cantando,  
me voy buscando a otro querer,  
un amorcito que no sea malo,  
asi quitarme del padecer.

I leave singing through the little towns,  
I leave searching for a new love,  
a little lover who isn't cruel-hearted,  
to get rid of my suffering.

#### JACINTO TREVIÑO

#### JACINTO TREVIÑO

5

Ya con ésta van tres veces  
en que se ve lo bonito;  
la primera fue en McAllen,  
en Brownsville y en San Benito.

Now with this it makes it three times  
that the beauty of it can be seen;  
the first time was in McAllen,  
then in Brownsville and in San Benito.

En la cantina de Bekar  
se agarraron a balazos;  
por dondequiera volaban  
botellas hechas pedazos.

In Baker's bar  
they shot it out with each other;  
all over the place were flying  
bottles made into little pieces.

Esa cantina de Bekar  
al momento quedó sola;  
nomás Jacinto Treviño  
de carabina y pistola.

This bar of Baker's  
emptied out instantly;  
only Jacinto Treviño remained  
with a carbine and a pistol.

-Entrenle rinchos cobardes,  
validos de la ocasión,  
creían que era pan blanco  
con tajadas de jamón.

"Come on in, you cowardly rangers,  
taking advantage of the occasion,  
you believed it was going to be  
white bread with slices of ham."

-Entrenle rinchos cobardes,  
el pleito no es con un niño;  
querían conocer a su padre,  
yo soy, Jacinto Treviño.

"Come on in, you cowardly rangers,  
your quarrel is not with a child;  
you wanted to meet your father,  
well, I'm Jacinto Treviño.

Decía el cherife mayor,  
como era un americano:  
-¡Ay qué Jacinto tan hombre,  
no niega ser mexicano!

The High Sheriff was saying,  
since he was an American:  
"Ay, that Jacinto, what a man!  
he doesn't deny being a Mexican!"

Decía Jacinto Treviño:  
-No me pueden agarrar,  
me voy para Río Grande,  
allá los voy a esperar.

Jacinto Treviño was saying:  
"You can't arrest me,  
I'm leaving for Río Grande,  
I'll wait for you over there."



Ya con ésta me despido,  
aquí a presencia de todos,  
yo soy Jacinto Treviño,  
vecino de Matamoros.

Now with this I bid farewell,  
here in the presence of all,  
I am Jacinto Treviño,  
a citizen of Matamoros.

## EL CONTRABANDO DE EL PASO

## CONTRABAND FROM EL PASO

El día siete de agosto  
estábamos desesperados;  
que nos sacaron del Paso  
para Kiansas mancornados.

On the seventh of August  
we were in despair;  
they took us from El Paso  
to Kansas in irons.

Nos sacaron de la corte  
a las ocho de la noche,  
nos llevaron para el dipo,  
nos montaron en un coche.

They took us out of the courthouse  
at eight o'clock at night,  
they took us down to the Depot,  
they put us in a railway coach.

Ya viene silbando el tren,  
ya repican las campanas;  
le pregunto a Mister Hill  
si vamos a Louisiana,

Whistle blowing, here comes the train,  
now the bells are ringing;  
I ask Mr. Hill  
if we are going to Louisiana.

Mister Hill, con su risita,  
me contesta: -No señor,  
pasaremos de Louisiana  
derechito a Leavenworth.

Mr. Hill, with his little chuckle,  
answers me: "No, mister,  
we will bypass Louisiana  
straight on to Leavenworth."

Unos vienen con dos años,  
otros con un año y un día,  
otros con dieciocho meses  
a la penitenciaría.

Some come with two years,  
others with a year and a day,  
others with eighteen months  
in the penitentiary.

Es bonito el contrabando,  
se gana mucho dinero,  
pero lo que más me puede,  
las penas de un prisionero.

Smuggling is very fine,  
you make lots of money,  
but what really gets to me,  
the suffering of a prisoner.

Pero de eso no hay cuidado,  
ya lo que pasó voló,  
algún día se han de encontrar  
donde me encontraba yo.

But there's no worry about that,  
let bygones be bygones,  
someday you all will find yourselves  
where I was then.

Ahí te mando, Mamacita.  
un suspiro y un abrazo:  
aquí dan fin las mañanas  
del contrabando de El Paso.

I am sending you, Dear Mom.  
a sigh and a hug;  
here ends the ballad  
about the contraband from El Paso.





Este es el nuevo corrido  
que yo les vengo a cantar,  
de dos hermanos muy buenos  
que tuvieron que pelear.

Juan Luis uno se llamaba,  
y el otro José Manuel;  
empezaron las discordias  
por una mala mujer.

Juan Luis se llega a una fiesta  
con la mujer que él quería;  
esto presente lo tengo,  
el año treinta corría.

En eso llega su hermano  
con su guitarra en la mano,  
empezó cantando versos  
como retando a su hermano.

-Oye, Juan Luis, que te digo,  
esa mujer ya fue mía.  
-No tengo la culpa, hermano,  
eso yo no lo sabía.

A su muy buena pistola  
José Manuel le echó mano;  
de dos balazos mató  
a la mujer de su hermano.

José Manuel, lo que has hecho,  
hoy mismo te va a pesar,  
mataste a lo que quería,  
con tu vida has de pagar.

This is the brand-new corrido  
that I'm going to sing to you  
about two very fine brothers  
who had to fight each other.

One was named Juan Luis,  
and the other was José Manuel;  
all the discord began  
because of a bad woman.

Juan Luis arrived at a party  
with the woman he loved;  
I have this clearly in mind,  
it was during the year of 1930.

At this point his brother arrived  
with his guitar in his hand,  
he began singing verses  
as if challenging his brother.

"Listen, Juan Luis, to what I tell you,  
this woman was mine."  
"It's not my fault, brother,  
I didn't know that."

José Manuel put his hand  
to his very fine pistol;  
with two bullets he killed  
his brother's woman.

"José Manuel, what you've done,  
this very day will make you sorry,  
you've killed what I loved,  
you must pay with your life."

Se salieron para afuera,  
y se oyeron los disparos;  
en el quicio de una puerta  
los dos hermanos quedaron.

They went outside,  
and shots were heard;  
on the threshold of a doorway  
the two brothers lay dead.

## MEXICO AMERICANO

## MEXICAN-AMERICAN

Por mi madre yo soy mexicano.  
Por destino soy americano,  
Yo soy de la raza de oro.  
Yo soy México-americano.

Mexican by ancestry,  
American by destiny,  
I am of the golden race,  
I am Mexican-American.

Yo te comprendo el inglés  
También te hablo en castellano.  
Yo soy de la raza noble.  
Yo soy México-americano.

I know the English language  
And speak Spanish too.  
I am of the noble race  
I am Mexican-American.

Zacatecas a Minnesota,  
De Tijuana a Nueva York,  
Dos países son mi tierra.  
Los defiando con mi honor.

Zacatecas to Minnesota,  
From Tijuana to New York,  
Two countries are my home.  
With my honor I'll defend them.

Dos idiomas y dos países.  
Dos culturas tengo yo.  
En mi suerte tengo orgullo  
Porque así lo manda Dios.

Two languages, two countries  
And two cultures I possess.  
I take pride in my fate  
It is so by God's will.





Luz Arcos fue ejecutado según era su sentencia, que en ese pueblo del Hondo mataron a los Barrientos.

Mil *nuevecientos* veintiocho señores tengan presente, que en ese pueblo del Hondo mataron a los Barrientos.

Luz Arcos les había dicho cuando ya se fue enojado: Que en unos cuantos minutos que to' quedaría arreglado.

Se fue por su carabina volviendo inmediatamente, al primero que asegura es a Luciano Barrientos.

Luego se vino Adefonso a ver qué había sucedido, con otra bala certera también lo dejó tendido.

Luego se vino José con su pistola en las manos y vino a encontrar ya muerto a su padre y a su hermano.

José le dice a Luz Arcos: "Así si serás valiente aquí cambian las vidas o no me llamo Barrientos."

Luz Arcos was executed as his sentence dictated, because here in this town of Hondo (TX) they killed some of the Barrientos family.

In the year of 1928, gentlemen, please bear in mind, that here in this town of Hondo (TX) they killed some of the Barrientos family.

Luz Arcos had said when he left in anger: "In just a few minutes everything will be taken care of."

He went for his carbine, returning immediately, the first one he killed was Luciano Barrientos.

Then Adefonso came in to see what had happened, with another well-aimed bullet Arcos laid him out also.

Then José came in with his pistol in his hands, only to find his father and his brother already dead.

José told Luz Arcos: "So if you're really a brave man, here we will exchange our lives, or my name's not Barrientos."

Se agarraron a balazos y José fue el más ligero, disparó el primer balazo y le agujeró el sombrero.

Se siguieron disparando sobre los cuerpos tendidos, tuvo más suerte Luz Arcos cayó José mal herido.

José estaba agonizando le trajeron el doctor, dijo: "Me voy con mi padre no me curen por favor."

Le preguntan qué desea, en sus últimos momentos: —Que me toquen "La Paloma" para morir más contento.—

They started shooting at each other and José was the quicker, he fired the first shot and put a hole through Arcos's hat.

They kept on shooting across the corpses laid out on the floor, Luz Arcos was the luckier, José fell down badly wounded.

José was in his mortal agony when they brought him the doctor, José said: "I'm going with my father, please don't try to save me."

They asked Luz Arcos what he wanted in his last moments before the execution: "Let them play me 'La Paloma' (a waltz) so I'll die happier."



Señores pongan cuidado  
lo que aquí voy a cantarles,  
me puse a rifar mi suerte  
con las mentas federales.

Por vender la cocaína,  
la morfina y marijuana  
me pescaron prisionero  
a las dos de la mañana.

El veintidós de febrero  
que corría por el *highway*  
en ese pueblo de Uvalde  
allí me pescó la ley.

Me pescaron prisionero  
al estilo americano,  
me presentaron los *brochis*  
todos con pistola en mano.

Me enseñaron mi retrato,  
la calle donde vivía,  
solito caí a la trampa  
ese desdichado día.

Me llevaron a la corte  
allí delante del juez  
presentaron lo que *maiba*,  
tequila, vino y jerez.

Un día en que triste estaba,  
ese día lloré por cierto  
recibí carta enlutada  
diciendo: —Tu madre ha muerto.—

Gentlemen, pay attention  
to what I am going to sing about here,  
I gambled my luck  
against those notorious federal agents.

For selling cocaine,  
morphine, and marijuana,  
they took me prisoner  
at two o'clock in the morning.

On the 22nd of February  
I was driving down the highway  
through the town of Uvalde,  
it was there that they caught up with me.

They took me prisoner  
American style,  
they showed me their badges  
with their pistols in their hands.

They showed me my photograph  
and the street where I lived,  
I was trapped all alone  
on that unlucky day.

They took me to court  
and there in front of the judge  
they presented what I was caught carrying:  
tequila, wine and sherry.

One day when I was very sad,  
that day I cried for sure,  
I received a letter bordered in black  
saying: "Your mother has died."

Yo lloraba y le gritaba,  
loco me quise volver:  
—Te fuistes madre querida  
ya no te volví yo a ver.

Ya con ésta me despido  
a los que están en la lista  
aquí se acaban cantando  
versos del contrabandista.

I wept and I cried out,  
I wanted to go crazy:  
"You have left me, beloved mother,  
and now I'll never see you again."

Now with this I bid farewell  
to those of you that haven't been caught yet,  
here comes to an end the singing  
of the ballad of the smuggler.

## EL CORRIDO DE PABLO VARELA

## THE BALLAD OF PABLO VARELA

*Hablado:* . . . se nos fugó aquí de la penitenciaria  
aquí en Crystal (City, TX),  
no sé pa' dónde, y luego se fue pa' rumbo a México,  
allá se hizo mayordomo, trabajando ganando  
bastante feria, en aquel tiempo era mucho dinero—  
quince pesos que le pagaban a él por día.  
Y de ahí se le compuse el corrido a él,  
que lo mataron por . . . no sé por qué,  
mas se me hace por  
borracheras también, algo así.  
Lo que yo sé que era mucha su alegría,  
le gustaba mucho fumar y andar pasando buen  
tiempo como estamos ahorita aquí.

El año del treinta y cuatro  
debemos de recordar,  
el corrido de Varela  
es el que voy a cantar.

Residió en Estados Unidos,  
demostró su valentía,  
a las leyes les dio prueba  
que miedo no les tenía.

*Spoken:* . . . he escaped from the Penitentiary  
here in Crystal City (Texas),  
I don't know to where, and then he went to Mexico,  
there he became the foreman, working and making  
good money, in those days it was a lot of money—  
fifteen pesos that they paid him every day.  
And from all of that I composed his corrido,  
because they killed him because . . . I don't really know why,  
but it occurs to me that it had something to do with  
drinking binges, too, something like that.  
What I do know is that he was a very happy guy,  
he really liked to smoke and to have a good time,  
just like we are right now here.

The year of 1934,  
we should all remember;  
the ballad of Varela  
is the one I'm going to sing.

He lived in the United States,  
he demonstrated his bravery;  
he proved to the lawmen  
that he wasn't afraid of them.



Calaboz de Crystal City  
gratos recuerdos dejó,  
les venció cuatro varillas,  
a Piedras Negras llegó.

Se fue para Don Martín,  
hombre muy inteligente,  
y llegó a ser mayordomo  
manejaando mucha gente.

Quince pesos le pagaban,  
era su sueldo por día,  
paseaba con sus amigos,  
era mucha su alegría.

El día cuatro de enero  
le invitaron a tomar,  
trataron de emborracharlo  
para poderlo matar.

Ernesto García lo hirió  
al momento tiró a huir,  
los empleados de su parte  
no lo quisieron seguir.

A Rosita lo llevaron  
de la Presa Don Martín,  
lo acudieron los doctores  
pero él no pudo vivir.

Pablo Varela muy grave  
y su familia llorando,  
a su padre le avisaron  
que ya estaba agonizando.

Ya con ésta me despido  
dispensen los trovadores,  
su nombre es José Barrientos  
también Eliseo Torres.

He left behind fond memories  
at the jail of Crystal City;  
he pried open four of the cell bars  
and escaped to Piedras Negras.

He went down to the Don Martín dam,  
and being a very intelligent man,  
he became a foreman there,  
in charge of many people.

They used to pay him fifteen pesos,  
that was his daily wage;  
he used to go out partying with his friends,  
he was enjoying life to the full.

On January 4, 1934  
some friends invited him to go drinking;  
they tried to get him drunk  
so it would be easier to kill him.

Ernesto García wounded him,  
and immediately fled the scene;  
the police, for their part,  
didn't dare to pursue him.

They took Varela to Rosita, Coahuila  
from the Don Martín dam;  
the doctors came to treat him  
but Varela was unable to survive.

Pablo Varela was in critical condition  
and his family was weeping,  
they informed his father  
that he was in his last mortal agony.

Now with this I bid farewell,  
please forgive the composers,  
one's name is José Barrientos,  
the other is Eliseo Torres.

## UN CHAVO DE LA PALOMA

Cuando yo vine a San Quilmas  
solano y sin conocer,  
me dio por buscar camello,  
pero nada pude hacer.

Los chavos de la paloma  
que eran suaves pa' buscar  
me pusieron muy al alba  
y pronto aprendí a jambar.

Los chavos de la paloma  
nunca se andan agüitando,  
no agarran madera seca  
ni se andan apasionando.

Yo no me escamo de nada  
conozco el rejuego bien,  
conozco la palomilla  
y a la justicia también.

Muy pronto compré mi chante  
pastilla y qué refinar,  
luego me apañé un rolante  
y me dio por vacilar.

En la pinta me tuvieron  
nomás por un resbalón,  
me dieron mis tres abriles  
y los puse de un jalón.

Yo a la coca la conozco,  
la Anita es buena mujer,  
la grifa es amiga mía,  
no la puedo aborrecer.

## ONE OF THE GUYS IN THE GANG

When I came to San Quilmas (*San Antonio*)  
all alone and not knowing anyone,  
I started to look for work,  
but I couldn't find anything.

The guys in the gang,  
who were slick at "finding" things,  
they set me straight,  
and very quickly I learned how to steal.

The guys in the gang  
never get discouraged,  
they don't waste their time,  
nor do they get too excited about anything.

I'm not scared of anything,  
I know the ropes really well,  
I know my gang well and I know  
my way around the justice system, too.

Very soon I bought my shack,  
and plenty of food to eat,  
then I got a hold of a car and I started  
to cruise around and have a good time.

I was in the pen  
just because of a little slip up,  
they gave me three years  
and I did them straight up.

I know cocaine well,  
Anita (heroin) is a great gal,  
Mary Jane (marijuana) is a good friend of mine,  
I can't stay away from her.

Hay batos que tienen rucas,  
que son amantes ni hablar,  
para mí son pocos gachos  
porque se dejan mandar.

Pero a mí me importa poco,  
que me traten comoquiera,  
para mí da punto al pecho  
y el espinazo cadera.

Adiós San Quilmas bendito  
ya me despido de ti,  
adiós ya lindas culecas  
que se acordaran de mí.

#### CARGA BLANCA

Cruzaron el Río Bravo  
ya casi al anochecer  
con bastante carga blanca  
que tenían que vender.

Llegaron a San Antonio  
sin ninguna novedad  
y se fueron derecho  
a la calle Navidad.

En una casa de piedra  
entraron José y Ramón,  
y en la *troca* se quedó  
esperándolos Simón.

Dos mil ochocientos pesos  
les pagó don Nicanor,  
y le entregaron la carga,  
¡eso sí de lo mejor!

There are guys that have girlfriends,  
of course they are lovers,  
but for me they're a little lame,  
because they let themselves be bossed around.

But to me it all matters very little,  
let them treat me however they want,  
it doesn't bother me  
and I do whatever I want.

Farewell blessed San Quilmas (San Antonio)  
now I bid thee farewell,  
farewell pretty girls,  
may you remember me well.

#### WHITE CARGO

They crossed the Río Grande  
just about sunset  
with plenty of "white cargo"  
that they had to sell.

They arrived in San Antonio  
without any trouble  
and they went straight away  
to Navidad Street.

José and Ramón entered  
a house built of stone,  
and Simón remained behind  
waiting for them in the truck.

Two thousand eight-hundred pesos  
Don Nicanor paid to them,  
and in return they handed over to him the "cargo,"  
this, of course, of the very best quality!

Apenas iban llegando  
a la calle Vera Cruz  
cuando les cerró el camino  
un carro negro sin luz.

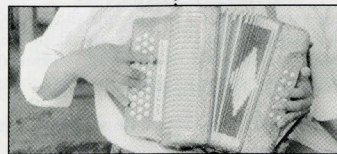
—No hagan ningún movimiento  
si no se quieren morir,  
y entréguenos el dinero  
que acaban de recibir.—

Varios tiros de pistola  
y unos gritos de dolor  
se escucharon de repente  
esa noche de terror.

Tres muertos y dos heridos  
la ambulancia levantó,  
pero el rollo de billetes  
de ahí desapareció.

Ahora después según dicen,  
ya ven la gente cómo que es,  
el dinero completito  
volvió a su dueño otra vez.

Despedidas, se las diera,  
pero hoy ya se me perdió,  
dejen los negocios chuecos,  
y ven lo que sucedió.



Scarcely were they approaching  
Vera Cruz Street  
when they were cut off  
by a black car running without lights.

"Don't make any moves  
if you don't want to die,  
and hand us over the money  
that you've just received."

A number of pistol shots  
and some cries of pain  
were heard suddenly  
on that night of terror.

Three dead and two wounded  
were hauled off by the ambulance,  
but the roll of cash  
disappeared completely from the scene.

Now, afterwards, according to what is being said,  
you can really see what people are like,  
they say that all the money  
returned to its original owner once again.

A farewell, I would give it to you if I could,  
but now it seems that I've lost it,  
just abandon crooked business,  
you've seen what happened.



14

*Hablado:* Ahora vamos a cantar un corrido,  
compuesto en el estado de Tamaulipas,  
"Los tequileros de Guerrero."

El día tres de noviembre  
qué día tan señalado,  
mataron tres de Guerrero  
los *rinches* del otro lado.

Salieron desde Guerrero  
con tequila ya anisado,  
el rumbo que ellos llevaban  
era San Diego mentado.

Llegaron al Río Grande,  
se pusieron a pensar:  
—Es bueno llevar a Leandro,  
porque somos dos nomás.

Le echaron el invite a Leandro,  
él les dice que no:  
—Miren que yo estoy enfermo,  
así no quisiera yo.

Al fin de tanto rogarle  
él los acompañó,  
en las Lomas de Miranda  
fue el primero que murió.

Los *rinches* son muy valientes,  
no se les puede quitar,  
los cazan como venados  
para poderlos matar.

Si los *rinches* fueran hombres

*Spoken:* Now we're going to sing a corrido,  
composed in the state of Tamaulipas,  
"The Tequila Smugglers from Guerrero (*Tamps.*)."

On the third day of November,  
what a memorable day!  
The *rinches*\* from the other side of the river  
killed three men from Ciudad Guerrero.

They set out from Guerrero  
with "gold" tequila,  
the direction they were heading  
was towards the notorious town of San Diego (*TX*).

Upon arriving at the Rio Grande,  
they stopped and thought:  
"It would be good to bring along Leandro,  
because there are only two of us."

They asked Leandro to go with them,  
he told them he didn't want to go:  
"Look, can't you see I'm sick?  
I don't want to go like this."

They kept asking him to go,  
and finally he went with them;  
in the hills of Miranda\*\*  
he was the first to die.

The *rinches* are very brave,  
there's no taking that away from them,  
they hunt Mexicans down like deer  
in order to kill them.

If the *rinches* were real brave men

y sus caras asomaran,  
también a los tequileros  
otros gallos les cantaran.

Ya con ésta me despido  
en mi caballo Lucero,  
mataron tres gallos finos  
del pueblito de Guerrero.

and met us face to face,  
then things would be quite different  
for the Tequila runners.

Now with this I bid farewell,  
mounted on my horse Lucero,  
they killed three fine fighting roosters  
from the town of Guerrero.

\**Rinche* originally referred to the Texas Rangers, but was quickly  
expanded to include all North American law enforcement, such as  
the Border Patrol and Prohibition Agents.

\*\**Lomas de Miranda*. Earlier versions say: "Lomas de  
Almirambo" but oral transmission has resulted in the easier to  
comprehend "Miranda" in many cases.



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# LOS Pingüinos del Norte

Recorded "Live" at cantina El Patio in Piedras Negras, Coah.

1. El Desesperado (Rubén Castillo)
2. Gregorio Cortéz (PD)
3. Benjamín Argumedo (PD)
4. Yo Soy Norteño (Dar)
5. Jacinto Trevino (PD)
6. El Contrabando De El Paso (PD)
7. Los Dos Hermanos (PD)
8. Mexico Americano (Rumel Fuentes)
9. Luz Arcos (PD)
10. El Contrabandista (Juan Gaytán)
11. Corrido De Pablo Varela (Barrientos - Torres)
12. Un Chavo De La Paloma (Manuel C. Valdez)
13. Carga Blanca (Manuel C. Valdez)
14. Los Tequileros (PD)

**Rubén Castillo Juárez** – vocals & accordion

**Hilario Gaytán Moreno** – vocals & guitar

**Ricardo Escalante** – bass & vocal  
on # 13 with Hilario

**Rumel Fuentes** – my guide, gritos, &  
vocal on # 8 with Rubén

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