

Ramiro Cavazos – lead voice & guitar or bajo sexto
Mario Montes – 2nd voice and accordion
Rafael Gaspar – string bass

1. **ANDANDO EN LA PARRANDA**
(Ranchera) (On a drinking spree) (Ramiro Cavazos)
(F-1213; A-099)
2. **EL CORRIDO DE SAN PEDRO**
(aka: **Corrido De Pepito**) (Corrido)
(The ballad of San Pedro; aka: The Ballad of Pepito)
(Ramiro Cavazos) (F-1125; A-067)
3. **LA PIEDRA LISA** (Ranchera)
(The smooth stone) (Ramiro Cavazos)
(F-1215; A-120)
4. **NO SE PORQUE** (Ranchera)
(I don't know why) (Ramiro Cavazos)
(F-1216; A-120)
5. **AMOR IMPOSIBLE** (Ranchera)
(Impossible love) (DAR) (F-1214; A-150)
6. **EL CORRIDO DE DIMAS DE LEON**
(Corrido) (The ballad of Dimas de Leon)
(Ramiro Cavazos) (F-1405; A- 212)
7. **LA CANTINERA** (Ranchera) (The bar maid)
(DAR) (F-1407; A-212)
8. **BALDOMERO DEL FIERRO** (Corrido)
(The ballad of Baldomero del Fierro)
(Ramiro Cavazos) (F-1426; A-236)

9. **SI TE MIRO CON OTRO** (Ranchera)
(If I see you with another) (Ramiro Cavazos)
(F-1410; A-229)
10. **PANCHO GARIBAY** (Tragedia) (The tragedy
of Pancho Garibay) (PD) (F-1428; A-229)
11. **ME VOY A DONDE NUNCA**
(Ranchera) (I am going where never)
(Ramiro Cavazos) (F-1430; A- 244)
12. **EL CORRIDO DEL MERENDERO**
(Corrido) (The ballad of Merendero)
(Ramiro Cavazos) (F-1427; A-244)
13. **LA ESCALERA** (Ranchera) (The ladder)
(DAR) (F-1523; A-264)
14. **EL SUBE Y BAJA** (Polka)
(The up and down polka) (Mario Montes)
(F-1556; A-294)
15. **EL CORRIDO DE JOSE MARTINEZ**
(Corrido) (The ballad of Jose Martinez) (Ramiro
Cavazos) (F-1560; A-294)

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Los Donneños

Mario Montes y Ramiro Cavazos



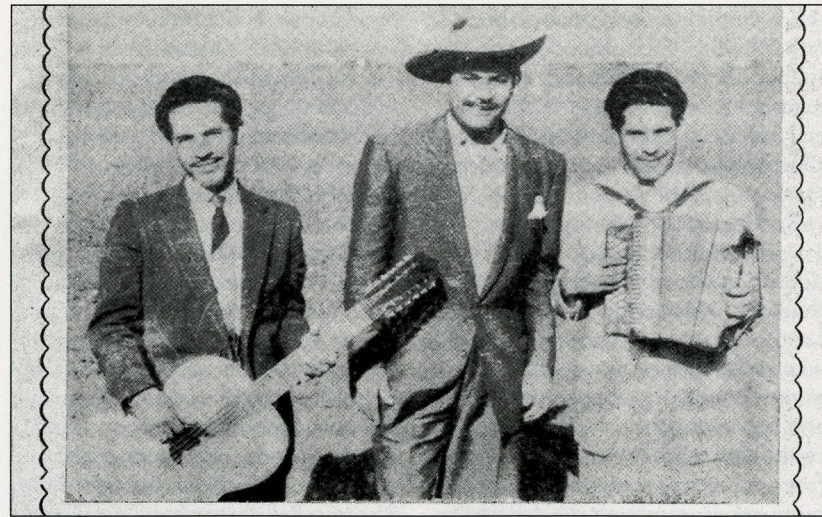
Los Donneños

The story of Los Donneños parallels that of Los Alegres de Teran (Tomas Ortiz and Eugenio Abrego – note: Arhoolie CD 9048) as both conjuntos (groups) became major pioneering stars in the mid 1950s of the then evolving Norteño music. This once regional rural music (from the North!) originated on both sides of the Texas-Mexican border but soon became the popular sound throughout *the* Spanish speaking Americas.

Most of these musicians grew up on ranches near the agricultural town of Teran in the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. In the late 1940s these young men were trying to find their most sympathetic singing partners to form duetos, which by that time just about had to include an accordion to be popular. Tomas Ortiz had already tried out several singers including Pablo Maldonado when he met Ramiro Cavazos. Accordionist Eugenio Abrego and Tomas Ortiz

had secured a regular radio program over at radio station in nearby Monterrey, N.L. Since Mr. Abrego did not consider himself a singer at the time, Ramiro Cavazos was welcomed to try out as a second voice. It wasn't long before the vocal duet of Ortiz & Cavazos made their first recordings for the small, local, and poorly distributed Orfeo record label.

By the 1940s instrumental accordion music had been gaining wide spread popularity at dances in the vast rural areas and small towns on both sides of the Texas-Mexican border. As farm hands began to earn a little money, largely as a result of the Bracero Program, which during World War II brought thousands of rural workers from the north of Mexico to work on farms in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, etc. This once local or regional music quickly became remarkably popular. On the Texas



(l to r) Ramiro Cavazos, Lalo Gonzalez, Mario Montez.

side this accordion driven music was supported by the working classes who heard it on records, on the radio, and at dances and many other social events.

Narciso Martinez, born south of the border but living just outside San

Benito, Tx. became the most influential accordionist in the entire region. This was due to his unique, pace setting style and the fact that he appeared on widely distributed records as early as 1936. However on the Mexican side of the Rio Bravo,

this accordion music had remained rather hidden due to the poverty of rural workers and their lack of buying power, as well as due to the general public's disdain for what they considered low class, rural, cantina music or worse!

Ramiro Cavazos, born February 16, 1927 in Garza Ayala (a small settlement in the county of Los Ramones, in the state of Nuevo Leon), was a handsome young man who early on tried to earn some money by singing all types of songs and playing his guitar wherever he could. He was ambitious and felt from the start that he would have more opportunities on the American side. About 1949 he crossed over illegally at Reynosa but was apprehended and jailed for 15 days by the Americans as a "wet-back" and sent back across the river. While waiting for a chance to cross again, he re-joined Tomas Ortiz and Eugenio Abrego who by then had arrived in Reynosa from Monterrey. After cross-

ing over several more times, he met Mario Montes in a cantina in Donna, Texas where both men were serenading customers. Mario was a fine accordionist who also sang and the two musicians struck up a friendship. Mario soon married an American citizen and became a "legal" immigrant. although Ramiro crossed over many times and made these, the first records by Los Donneños, he did not get his legal papers until 1954. During the period when these records were made in McAllen, Ramiro spent most of his time in Reynosa as a guitar player with Ortiz and Abrego (who at times already called themselves Los Alegres de Teran). Around 1950 Ramiro made more records with Tomas Ortiz for the Orfeo label but earned his living playing weddings, quinceañeras, and on week ends in the cantinas. Ramiro said that in those beer joints there was plenty of money to be made from the Braceros who had come back from the cotton fields of

Texas and wouldn't let the musicians go until two or three in the morning. They charged three Mexican pesos per song and made about 40 or 50 pesos each per night with which he says you could live like a king! Ramiro was playing mainly guitar and did not really take up the bajo sexto until after Mario told him he did not like the guitar.

Ramiro went on to tell me that in Reynosa you had to sing a lot of corridos and rancheras – that's what they like there. The "Cadillac" bar, owned by his nephew, Goyo Garcia, had been a center for the corrido crowd for some time. Ramiro put it this way: "There are many corrido singers who go there. They have to know all the corridos. If I were to go there today I could probably sing only maybe ten or fifteen corridos, but in the old days I could do forty or fifty. But since I don't go from cantina to cantina any more, I don't have to know so many. In the days when we worked along side Los

Alegres and all those others, you had to know corridos or you wouldn't make any money. They would get mad and run you out! Those guys who get drunk on weekends, they want to hear their corridos, they'll pay you two or three hundred pesos. And in Monterrey, if you don't know your corridos, you have no business playing there in the cantinas!" Most of these corridos (including those heard here) were about very local events and persons, hardly known outside the area.

Once Ramiro Cavazos had his legal papers he and Mario Montes as Los Donneños were soon making a good living playing in cantinas and for dances on the US side of the border. With their Falcon records giving them at least some local name recognition and a certain amount of status, they were soon able to demand higher fees at their local appearances. Los Donneños were also soon broadcasting live over several radio stations on both sides of the border and every

Wednesday and Thursday they were heard over the powerful KGBT in Harlingen, where the program host was Martin Rosales. Their contract with Falcon Records ran out in 1954 and since the company did not want to improve the terms, Los Donneños turned to a friend in Corpus Christi, Genaro Tamez, who had started Discos Torero. Mr. Tamez was a good promoter, sponsored their dances and recorded them with the full conjunto including drums and bass. (Those Torero sides can be heard on Rodel CD 060 – 30 Exitos, released by Discos RyN). It wasn't long before Los Donneños was approached by Felipe Valdes Leal of Columbia Records in Mexico, who offered them a contract promising to pay royalties! They were glad to sign and their first records for Columbia were recorded at radio station XEP in Monterrey. By 1957 they went to Mexico City with their conjunto to not only record but also to perform. About this time Los Donneños also

met and began to work with Lalo Gonzalez, better known as "El Piporro," a major ranchera artist who recorded for Musart. With him, Los Donneños toured not only all over the US, but to Cuba, Venezuela, etc. They also appeared with El Piporro and Rosita Quintana in the Mexican film: "Paloma Negra." The Mexican record and film industry was beginning to take notice of the rapidly increasing popularity of Norteño music. In 1961, Los Donneños received the title of "Campeones Nacionales de Música Norteña" at a contest organized by the Government of Tamaulipas. The group stayed with Columbia/CBS Records for 16 years until 1970 when they started to record for their old compadre, Basilio Villareal in Monterrey. By that time Basilio had formed DLV Records (which stood for Discos Larga Vida, aka Long Lived Records!). In more recent years the group recorded for Discos RyN, owned by Ramiro Cavazos with a

partner in Monterrey and which also distributes the Rodel label.

Accordionist Mario Montes died in November of 1991. Today Ramiro Cavazos still lives in McAllen and is often at his record shop (Discos RyN at 209 south 23rd street), where he cheerfully greets visitors. He is proud of the role he has played in the development of this music, which used to be known locally simply as "musica regional" but has since become

incredibly popular as Musica Norteña all over the Americas. These are the first recordings by Los Donneños and reflect the repertoire popular in the cantinas at that time!

*Chris Strachwitz — 2006,
based largely on an interview with
Ramiro Cavazos conducted on
December 22, 2000 by
Jim Nicolopulos, David Champion,
and Chris Strachwitz.*

Re-issue produced and edited from original discs by Chris Strachwitz

Cover photo: Falcon Records archives

These are the first recordings made by Los Donneños

All selections originally recorded for Falcon Records in McAllen, Texas

between 1950 and 1954 and originally issued on 78 rpm discs

Sound restoration by Tom Diamant

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Mario Montes y
Ramiro Cavazos

1950-1954

Grabaciones Originales
Historic First Recordings

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