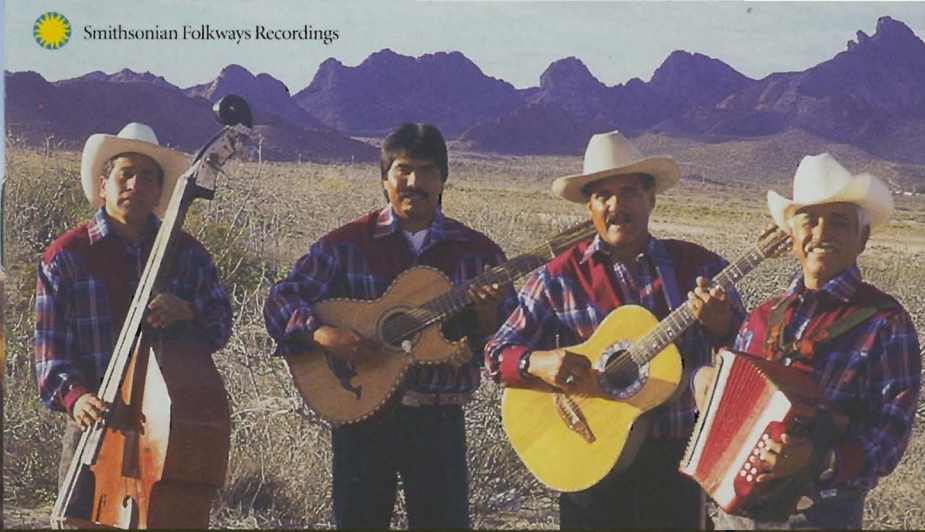




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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings
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HEROES & HORSES

CORRIDOS FROM THE ARIZONA-SONORA BORDERLANDS



The *corridos* in this collection come from the region comprising southern Arizona and northern Sonora, one that was divided politically by the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, but is unified by a Mexican folk culture. These *corridos* — the word translates loosely as “ballads” — are story songs that tell tales of revolution, crime, heroic showdowns, horse races, and disasters in this overlooked part of the world. *Heroes and Horses* is a slice of life along the Arizona-Sonora border as it has been lived and memorialized in *corridos* over the course of the 20th century. Rich with the folk traditions of northern Mexico, rarely are the engaging voices of these balladeers accompanied by more than a guitar and an accordion. Tales of triumph and tragedy fill this collection and bring the Arizona-Sonora borderlands to life. This enhanced CD includes 71 minutes of music, extensive notes, photos, and complete lyrics in Spanish and English on the disc.

1. El Corrido de Nogales 4:02
2. El Moro de Cumpas 4:38
3. La Cárcel de Cananea 7:08
4. La Tolota 4:18
5. El Palomino y El Gancho 4:06
6. Corrido de Oquitoa 3:44
7. El General Santa Cruz 3:47
8. Rafaelita 4:12
9. José Lizardo 8:02
10. Máquina 501 3:49
11. Joaquín Murrieta 4:29
12. El Corrido del Palomino 3:05
13. El Corrido del Minero 2:49
14. Los Indios con Obregón 5:50
15. Canal del Infiernillo 4:08
16. El Corrido del Guasiado 4:00

HEROES & HORSES

CORRIDOS FROM THE ARIZONA-SONORA BORDERLANDS



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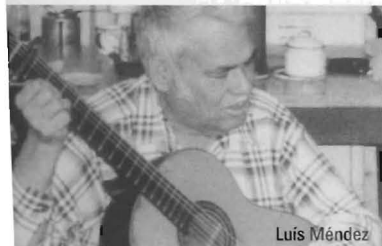




Robert Lee Benton



Los Riberenos del Golfo



Luis Méndez



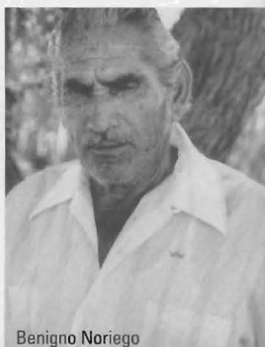
Guadalupe Bracamonte



Oscar González



Benigno González (l) and Francisco Federico (r)



Benigno Noriego

HEROES & HORSES

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INTRODUCTION

Corridos—the word translates loosely as “ballads” or “story songs”—have been an important part of Mexican folk literature since the late 19th century. They continue to play a vital role in reflecting and shaping public opinion. Reporting upon and interpreting current events, they still serve as editorial pages of *el pueblo mexicano*, or the Mexican people. Corrido composers have long favored a number of subjects—battles and heroes of the Revolution, murderous duels between brave individuals, horse races, disasters and tragedies, incidents of social injustice, spectacular crimes—precisely the topics which, as any journalist knows, the public wants to hear about. During the last three-quarters of the 20th century, the corrido also became a popular form in the world of commercial entertainment, and the demand for new (and copyrightable) songs led to the development of corridos telling of imaginary incidents. But to a great extent, the corrido still reports upon events that really happen.

Not all corridos narrate a story. Some, such as “El Corrido del Minero” in this collection, include minimal action. These reflective songs seem to have been part of the tradition for a long time; “El Minero” may well be of 19th-century origin. One of the most famous 19th-century corridos from southern Arizona, “El Merino Mentado,” is really a series of comments on a famous horse race, rather than a description of the race itself. Another nonnarrative type of corrido praises a specific hometown or city or village. Such a song is “El Corrido de Oquitoa” in this collection. There is no narrative element at all, but simply a series of fond descriptions of the town in question. Neither of these song types is what a folklorist would call a narrative ballad, but both come under the Mexican folk category of “corrido,” and so both types of song appear in this collection.

The corridos in this collection come from southern Arizona and northern Sonora, a region divided politically by the international border that bisects it, but unified in its Mexican culture. The entire region was part of northwest Mexico until the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. To this day, many families have

members on both sides of the border, and many of southern Arizona’s folk traditions are indistinguishable from those of northern Sonora.

Starting with extremely dry desert near the Colorado River, the Arizona-Sonora border moves eastward through an increasingly hilly country, home of many varieties of cactus, and finally shades into the Chihuahuan Desert, near the western boundaries of the states of New Mexico and Chihuahua. This desert country was never heavily populated until the late 20th century, but it has its own unique cultures and history. Along the western part of the U.S.–Mexico border, in both Arizona and Sonora,



The Church at Oquitoa

live the Tohono O’odham, formerly known as the Papago Indians. To their south, along the Sonoran coast, live the Seris, a people who still gain much of their livelihood from the sea. Still further south lies the homeland of the Yaquis, a determined people, famous for their defense of their land against all encroachments. Other colonies of Yaquis live in Arizona, near Tucson.

Although much of this region is ranching and cattle country, mining is also an important occupation, and the ever-present sea to the west offers other possibilities and occupations. The border itself acts as both magnet and barrier, while the uneasy coexistence of the two national cultural traditions adds a certain tension to the region. In recent years, both Arizona and Sonora have increasingly been affected by the drug trade and the movement of huge numbers of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans into the United States.

The corridos in this collection deal with many of the topics that are dear to the hearts of Sonorans. There are corridos depicting conflict between Mexicans and the other cultural groups

occupying the region: Anglos ("Joaquín Murrieta" and "Nogales"), Yaquis ("Los Indios con Obregón"), and Seris ("Canal del Infiernillo"). There are corridos of the Mexican Revolution ("Los Indios con Obregón" and "General Santa Cruz"). There are tragedies ("José Lizardo" and "Rafaelita"). Mining and miners, another important occupation in Sonora, make up at least the indirect subject matter of several corridos ("Joaquín Murrieta," "El Minero," "José Lizardo," and "Máquina 501"). Sonora is bounded on the west by the Gulf of California, so two songs ("Canal del Infiernillo" and "Los Guasiados") deal with boats and fishing. But perhaps most important of all as a



regional topic are horse races. The horse occupies an important position in traditional Mexican culture. The Spanish conquest of the native peoples of Mexico would have been impossible without horses. The development of the cattle industry of northern Mexico depended upon horses and skills developed by horsemen. Horse races became important forms of recreation,

especially in the northern states. Mexican horse races, unlike those in English-speaking countries, are almost invariably match races, involving two horses. When reported upon in corridos, these races take on many characteristics of the confrontations between two *valientes* (brave men), which are an important corrido topic. Two brave horses go up against each other: one wins, but unless the loser shows some cowardly characteristic or is suspected of not giving its all to the contest, both are accorded equal honor. "El Palomino" is a horse-race corrido that seems to date from around 1900. "El Palomino y El Gancho" and "La Tolota" are from Sonora's Altar Valley, and date from the third quarter of the 20th century. "El Moro de Cumpas," one of the two or three most famous Sonoran corridos,

describes a race that took place in Agua Prieta, across the border from Douglas, Arizona, in 1957.

Certain important corrido topics don't appear in this collection: the struggles of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans for social justice in the United States; the immigrant experience in general; the dangers of crossing the border into the United States; and the drug trade—all provide popular and important corrido topics. That they do not appear in this collection is simply because they are available elsewhere, on commercial discs, tapes, and records. Because of this, I decided to concentrate on the themes mentioned above.

This collection focuses on older themes and material, and, with a few exceptions, does not really take the border and its tensions into account. It deals for the most part with happenings on the Sonoran side of the border. Many of the songs have never been recorded commercially before, but I have included the four best-known of the Sonoran corridos. "Joaquín Murrieta," tells of happenings in gold-rush California, with a Sonoran from the Altar Valley as the protagonist. "La Cárcel de Cananea" is perhaps the most famous of all Sonoran ballads, and describes what happened to a young man who went up to a border town to have a look around. "Máquina 501" recounts a true tale of superlative heroism in the mining town of Nacoazari in 1907. "El Moro de Cumpas" tells of a famous horse race in the border community of Agua Prieta. These four songs are likely to be in the repertoires of most local professional traditional singers; the other corridos on the disc are less often heard, and a few are rare indeed.

Here, then, is a slice of life along the Arizona-Sonora border as it has been lived and memorialized in corridos over the course of the 20th century. All these songs come from the repertoires of traditional singers, who considered all of them worth learning, singing, and remembering. Together, they make a picture of one of the least-known parts of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. This release features an enhanced CD program containing the lyrics of each song in both Spanish and English (also found at www.folkways.si.edu/catalog/40475lyrics.htm).

THE SINGERS

Music is an important part of any celebration in Mexican culture, and local musicians play a vital role within their communities. Musicians playing for a celebration will at least be fed; if money is to change hands in this desert country, the phrase used is often “va a llover”—“it’s going to rain.” Not one of the singers on this disc is a full-time professional, but all have played for pay within their own communities. Here are the singers and musicians on the disc.

Luis Méndez was born in Caborca, Sonora, in 1924, and died in 1997, a few days short of his 73rd birthday. He worked in agriculture and mining, with singing as a strong avocation. He had a remarkable repertoire of old regional corridos, many of which he learned from his mother and grandmother, both of whom also played guitar. At the time of this recording, he used a wheelchair because he had lost a leg to diabetes. He was assisted on second guitar by **Guadalupe Bracamonte**, also of Caborca.

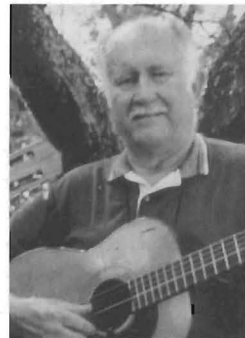
Antonio Federico was born in Sasabe, Sonora, a border town west of Nogales. He has lived in Tucson since the 1950s. Until his retirement, he worked for the Pima Air and Space Museum of Tucson. Three of the corridos he sings here were learned from his father, the late Arturo Federico of Oquitoa, Sonora. He was joined for this recording by **Hipólito “Polo” Romero** (guitar and second voice), **Paul Romero** (guitar), **Francisco Moreno** (accordion), and **Alfonso Molina** (guitarrón). The two Romeros and Francisco Moreno were for many years members of the Conjunto Polo Romero, a popular group that played at local weddings, *quinceañeras*, and other celebrations.

Los Ribereños del Golfo (The Gulf Shoreliners) are a four-piece conjunto norteño that plays regularly at the Pargo Rojo (“Red Snapper”) restaurant in Bahía Kino, Sonora. The group consists of



Crecencio Ayala (accordion, vocals), **Rosario Aguirre** (guitar, vocals), **Gregorio Ramírez** (bajo sexto), and **Victor Manuel Velarde** (tololoche).

Francisco Federico and **Antonio Gonzáles** live in the Altar Valley of Sonora. The Altar is a lovely desert valley with a small river flowing through it. It is dotted with 18th-century mission churches. Francisco is Antonio Federico’s cousin and lives in his native town of Oquitoa. Antonio, a surprisingly young eighty years old, is from the nearby community of Átil. Both have worked most of their lives as farmers and cattlemen. In addition, Sr. Gonzáles has been a professional singer for most of his life. The two have been playing together for about twenty years. In this session, Sr. Gonzáles plays rhythm guitar while Sr. Federico plays lead guitar. The three corridos they sing here were composed by Benigno Noriega, a local *corridista* from the nearby *ejido* (communal farm) of La Sangre. Sr. Noriega has been composing corridos about local events and in honor of Altar Valley towns since the 1950s.



Bobby Benton and **Oscar González** live in Tucson. Robert Lee “Bobby” Benton, Jr., is a well-known figure in the local *mexicano* community, and is almost always asked to sing a few songs at local parties. He and his partner sing in a more modern, urban style than do most of the other performers on this disc.

Benton’s grandfather was a miner from Missouri who settled and married in northwest Mexico. Along this part of the border, it is not unusual to find families like the Bentons, who have non-Hispanic surnames but are culturally *mexicano*. Mr. Benton’s day job is selling Dodge cars.

THE SONGS

1. El Corrido de Nogales

Robert Lee Benton, Jr., vocal and guitar; Oscar González, vocal, lead guitar. Recorded 19 June 1999, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

On Tuesday, 27 August 1918, things were tense in the twin border cities of Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora. Rumors were rife on the American side that German spies and agitators were hard at work in the Sonoran town. The United States had entered World War I in April 1917, impelled by the notorious Zimmermann telegram, offering support to Mexico should it declare war on its neighbor to the north. On the Mexican side, the perceived insult of the Pershing punitive expedition of 1916–1917 was still fresh in many memories. As tension built, units of the 35th Infantry and the 10th (Negro) Cavalry were moved into Nogales, Arizona, while on the Sonoran side, armed men were observed digging trenches on a hill close to the border. Things were ripe for an explosion along the fence separating the towns.

That explosion happened on 27 August at about 4:00 PM. According to one account, an American customs guard at the Morley Avenue gate in downtown Nogales saw a Mexican man crossing the border into Sonora and ordered him to halt. When the man kept on walking into Mexico, the guard ran outside, accompanied by a military sentinel, one Private W. H. Klint of the 35th Infantry. Seeing the United States customs official pulling a pistol as he ran, one of the customs guards on the Mexican side pulled his own sidearm and fired at the Americans, wounding Private Klint. Firing erupted on all sides, and the Battle of Nogales had begun.

Among the first casualties was Felix Peñalosa, *Presidente municipal* (mayor) of Nogales, Sonora, who approached the border waving a white handkerchief on the end of his cane. He was shot dead. Firing continued, and it became obvious that the Mexican positions on a nearby hill allowed their occupants to fire down into the American troops. At about 5 PM, detachments of the

10th Cavalry crossed the border, took the hill, and drove combatants out of some of the Mexican houses near the border.

Mexican and American officials began meeting at about 6:30 PM, and a truce was declared. And so ended, except for a few more stray shots, the battle of Nogales. Three Americans were reported killed and 24 wounded, and an estimated 30 Mexicans were killed, with the same number wounded. Rumors had it that two Germans were identified among the Mexican dead—a statement that is impossible to verify, but which did nothing to ease the tension.

To close this account, I offer the reminiscences of one Patsy Sutton, as reported to me many years later by a mutual friend. Ms. Sutton was in a Nogales hotel a few blocks from the border when the shooting broke out, and watched much of the battle from an upper-story window. She told of seeing a little old lady sitting on her porch on the Mexican side, with a large piece of handwork on her lap. As the American soldiers passed, she reached under the cloth, drew out a pistol, snapped off a few shots at the soldiers, replaced the firearm, and continued watching and working.

This corrido comes from a typed manuscript that had originally been in the possession of Bobby Benton's father. The manuscript version opens with a recited stanza, sung at the start of this performance. The formality of this opening, coupled with the final stanza about singing the song for *dos reales* (fifty cents), suggests that the corrido circulated either by phonograph record or printed broadsheet. I have been unable to find a "Corrido de Nogales" in any discography.

In 1995, filmmaker Luis Mock needed a corrido about the battle, for his work *La Mera Frontera*. Unable to find one, he had San Diego poet Ramón "Chunky" Sánchez compose one, which is on deposit at the Southwest Folklore Center. An excellent corrido in its own right, it has fourteen stanzas, and gives details of the day's happenings. It is interesting that our corrido should have been preserved

in at least one family in Tucson, while diligent search in Nogales has failed to turn up anyone who has even heard of it. It is also interesting that the man who has the song is by no means the stereotypic rural folksinger, but a well-known, bicultural and bilingual car salesman with a college education.

NOTES TO "EL CORRIDO DE NOGALES"

A different version of this corrido appears on pages 93–94 of Antonio Avitia Hernández 1997, vol. 3. An account of the Battle of Nogales appears in Elliot Stearns's "Battle of Ambos Nogales," *Sombrero* (Tucson: Pima County Medical Society, May 1990), 15–19. Other accounts are on file at the library of the Arizona Historical Society.

2. El Moro de Cumpas

Robert Lee Benton, Jr., vocal and guitar; Oscar González, vocal, lead guitar. Recorded 19 June 1999, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

This corrido is one of the best-known of the Sonoran story songs. Composed by the late Leonardo Yáñez and based on a real race, it is known and sung by almost every professional and semiprofessional musician in Arizona and Sonora. The story behind it occurred in 1957, when Rafael Romero owned the Copacabana night club in the border town of Agua Prieta, Sonora. Because of a complex set of circumstances, he came into the possession of a fast horse, which he renamed "Relámpago" or "Lightning." Word of this horse got around, and the Frisby family of the ranching town of Cumpas, Sonora, owners of the regionally famous "El Moro," challenged Relámpago to a race. The race generated a tremendous amount of excitement, and took place on March 17th along an unpaved street in Agua Prieta, with the finish line being close to the Copacabana. Contrary to popular expectation, Relámpago won. (There were at least two rematches, with the same result.) Huge amounts of money were bet on the race, and many Moro supporters lost money, cars, trucks, and even ranches.

Leonardo Yáñez, a native of Nacozari de García, was a member of the Mariachi Copacabana. Before the race, he asked Don Rafael's permission to compose a corrido on the event, and stationed friends at the start and the midpoint of the track. He himself stood at the finish line. The resulting corrido, recorded by local musicians and picked up by nationally known singers, became a hit, and, eventually, the subject of a movie. The horses became famous. El Moro was for years taken to fairs and other public events, and people would pay money to charities to get their pictures taken with the famous horse. Later on, after both horses had died, Yáñez wrote a corrido praising them.

The fifth stanza in this performance, describing spectators at the race, was composed by Yáñez, but is usually left out of recorded performances, perhaps to keep the song within the time limits imposed by a 78 or 45 RPM single. Because most singers learn their material from records, this verse is seldom heard.

NOTES TO "EL MORO DE CUMPAS"

The story of this famous race and corrido, along with Leonardo Yáñez's other horse-race corridos, can be found on pages 123–145 of James S. Griffith's *A Shared Space: Folklife in the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995). The song has been recorded by many Mexican singers, including Los Alegres de Terán and Gilberto Valenzuela, "El Sahuaripa."

3. La Cárcel de Cananea

Robert Lee Benton, Jr., vocal and guitar; Oscar González, vocal, lead guitar. Recorded 19 June 1999, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

This, Sonora's most famous corrido, celebrates an obscure event that happened to an unknown person. It is not related to Cananea's most famous link with Mexican history—a strike

against the management of the American-owned Cananea Copper Company in 1907, a strike that some hail as a harbinger of the 1910 Revolution, and which was put down by American vigilantes from across the border. It is also safe to say that the protagonist is no innocent—he describes himself in the first two stanzas as a tough guy looking for a little trouble, contemplates escape from the train taking him to jail, sasses the judge, and has cellmates with the nicknames of Ape, Little Lion, and Crocodile. At the beginning and end of the song, he describes himself as *un gallo tan jugado* (a well-fought rooster). One gets the impression that this is by no means his first experience with the law.

The Cananea jail, still on a mesa in the middle of town, is now a regional museum. A fourteen-stanza version of the corrido is posted on the wall, attributed to an unknown author. In the tenth verse, in response to the question “Do you know why you are a prisoner?” the narrator answers:

Luego yo le contesté,
“Si no sabe, yo sí sé;
sí, señor, aquí estoy preso
por unos tres que maté.”

Later I answered him,
“If you don’t know, I sure do;
yes, sir, I’m a prisoner here
for some three (men) that I killed.”

This performance is a classic.

NOTES TO “LA CÁRCEL DE CANANEA”

This popular corrido, also known as “El Corrido de Cananea,” was recorded three times before 1940. Guty Cárdenas recorded it in New York in November 1928. It was issued as Columbia 3357, side A, and reissued on Folkways LP FW 9813. The Trío Gárnica-Ascencio recorded it for Victor on 4 October of the same year, also in New York. This recording was

issued as Victor 46023. Finally, Antonio Pereira y Salcés González recorded it in Richmond, Indiana, on 18 September 1929, with an orchestra. This recording was released as Gennet 40278 and Universal 4053. The song also appears in most popular printed corrido collections. The most complete version may be found on a post card sold at the Cárcel de Cananea itself.

4. La Tolota

Francisco Federico, vocal; Antonio González, guitar and vocal. Recorded 28 May 1999, in Oquitoa, Sonora, by Jack Loeffler.

This corrido, by Benigno Noriega, describes a race held in Tubutama, Sonora, on 12 September 1969. As in the case of the other two horse-race corridos on this disc, the composer conveys a sense of the excitement of the occasion, an excitement heightened by the heavy gambling that traditionally takes place before such races. The word *sevenoleven* is worth mentioning; it is the local Spanish term for shooting craps, and comes from the English phrase *seven-eleven*.

The race described in this corrido took place in the old mission community of Tubutama, in the Altar Valley. Like many 18th-century communities in the region, Tubutama is located on a rise above its river. A lovely church built in the 1780s occupies one side of the town plaza. Horse-race corridos usually mention the owners of the steeds; in this case, the two men were José “El Cotoy” Mirada and Oscar Treviño, both of the nearby community of Altar. As is customary, they signed an agreement stating the terms on which the race was to be run. It is not uncommon for such an agreement to be disputed by one party or another right up to the starting time.

In this particular race, El Ruperto refused to enter the starting gate, apparently because people were crowding too close to it. This was possibly a strategy on the part of some of La Tolota’s supporters to make the opposing horse nervous, thus influencing the outcome of the race. Such incidents are all too common in match races, although they are mentioned more often

in informal stories than in corridos, which tend to emphasize the bravery of both horses. Two older Tubutama men, Reyes Ortiz and López Ramírez, noticed the situation, and the problem was taken care of by López Ramírez and El Ruperto's owner. After heavy betting, the race finally took place at 6 PM, and La Tolota passed El Ruperto at midpoint to win.

5. El Palomino y el Gancho

Francisco Federico, vocal; Antonio González, guitar and vocal. Recorded 28 May 1999, in Oquitoa, Sonora, by Jack Loeffler.

This horse-race corrido is the first one composed by Benigno Noriega, a poet from the ejido of La Sangre, Sonora. La Sangre is on the edge of the Altar Valley, and fairly near Átil and Oquitoa, the towns where the singers live. Although Sr. Noriega has composed several corridos about horse races, he says he isn't a fan of such events—he much prefers boxing. Horse races, however, are what the local folks want to hear and sing about, so he writes about them. This is a big country; although the race took place in Magdalena, both horses came from near Caborca, a town at least two hours' drive away, even on today's paved roads. El Gancho, the challenger, who had lost to El Palomino before, is described as a *caballo cuatralbo*, a horse with four white spots. This can mean four white "socks" or three white socks and a white spot on its nose. Horse color is considered to reflect horse character, and a horse with more than two white socks is considered by many to have little staying power. The corrido describes the betting, and suggests that the palomino was worried because the Gancho fans offered big odds against him, and because some of his usual supporters had bet against him. However, the palomino won the race. Gutiérrez and Michel were the owners of the two horses.

6. Corrido de Oquitoa

Francisco Federico, vocal; Antonio González, guitar and vocal. Recorded 28 May 1999, in Oquitoa, Sonora, by Jack Loeffler.

This corrido by Benigno Noriega celebrates the village of Oquitoa, home of Francisco Federico, and the place where these recordings were made. Oquitoa is indeed a lovely place, with its houses clustered at the foot of a hill on which stands the 18th-century mission church of San Antonio. I have yet to find a Sonoran community of any size that doesn't have at least one corrido in its honor. While this type of song hasn't received much attention from folklorists and other collectors, who prefer the narrative corridos, it is definitely a corrido as defined by the community, and therefore an example is included on this disc.

7. El General Santa Cruz

Antonio Federico, vocal; Frank Moreno, harmony vocal and accordion; Paul Romero, guitar; Alfonso Molina, guitarrón. Recorded 26 June 1997, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

The story behind "El General Santa Cruz" is a complete mystery. All we know is that the action takes place in and near Sasabe, a small border village in the Altar Valley, west of Nogales. I assume the song to be based on a real incident during the Revolution, because the *corridista* found it important to include the names of many of the presumably local individuals involved. None of them, however, shows up in the Sonoran history texts I have consulted, and no battles or confrontations are recorded as having taken place in or near Sasabe, so the song must stand alone, uninformed by any data. Apparently, the composer thought that whatever took place involving all these people was so well known that it didn't need being spelled out, but so far we have found nobody who remembers

what it might have been. The only clue is that the phrase “estas son las mañanitas de” usually refers to a death. None of the rest of the action sounds particularly heroic, so the final verse may be satirical in intent. The song is to the same tune as “El Corrido del Minero.”

8. Rafaelita

Antonio Federico, vocal; Frank Moreno, harmony vocal and accordion; Paul Romero, guitar; Alfonso Molina, guitarrón. Recorded 26 June 1997, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

This starkly tragic tale of two men killing each other over an unfaithful woman has been collected elsewhere in Sonora. Two published versions place the action in the mountains, rather than in the seaport of Guaymas, as this version does; one describes the two protagonists as outsiders (*forasteros*). The song was also recorded by the great *ranchera* singer Pedro Infante, in a version different from that given here. Whether the song is based on a specific incident is unclear, but such duels, especially after drinking “fine liquor” in a cantina, certainly do happen. The theme of two brave men going up against each other and meeting their destinies is repeated time and again in Mexican corridos. In fact, many collections include *corridos de valientes* as a major corrido topic.

NOTES TO “RAFAELITA”

Texts to this corrido are printed in M. A. Serna Maytorena (1984:31–33), and in Antonio Avitia Hernández, *Corridos de Durango* (México, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1989, pp. 314–315.) This latter version is taken from a recording by Pedro Infante. The first known recording of the corrido was made on 6 September 1935, in El Paso, Texas, by González y Rosales. It was issued on both sides of Vocalion 8748.

9. José Lizardo

Antonio Federico, vocal; Frank Moreno, harmony vocal and accordion; Paul Romero, guitar; Alfonso Molina, guitarrón. Recorded 26 June 1997, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

This tale of a mining accident seems to have been popular in the Tucson area in the early 20th century. Acosta collected five texts from older informants in the late 1940s, and Mendoza includes a version from Parral, Chihuahua, also in the heart of mining country. The protagonist’s given name is consistently José or José María; his family name is given variously as Lizardo, Elisorio, Lisalde, and Ylisardo—expectable variations for an unusual name preserved in oral transmission. In comments on the corrido, Acosta reminds the reader that miners often relax from their dangerous work by means of heavy drinking especially on Saturday night, and suggests that young José was recovering from such a bout when he struck his mother on a Sunday. Such a shocking act of impiety, however, cannot and did not go unpunished. From the moment of the blow, the narrative unrolls with the certainty of a Greek tragedy.

Two of the stanzas begin with lines about a stain of hail and a stain of coffee falling. These images do not appear in any other versions I am acquainted with. Antonio Federico, the singer, feels they function mostly as rhymes; although it is probable that they had specific meaning for the original composers and singers, that meaning seems to be lost.

It is uncertain just where and when this tragedy—if indeed it happened at all—took place. One of Acosta’s informants said that it happened in El Plomo, Sonora, around 1908, and that he had met Lizardo’s sister. The version here identifies the composer as a Tucsonan named Lorenzo León—a detail not found in any other version with which I am familiar. In the long run, as with all good stories, the facts are relatively unimportant.

NOTES TO "JOSÉ LIZARDO"

Acosta (1951:102–107) gives five versions, all collected in the Tucson area. Mendoza (1954:268–272) prints a text to "José Lizorio" collected in Parral, Chihuahua. I am aware of no recordings of this gripping corrido.

10. Máquina 501

Antonio Federico, vocal; Hipólito Romero, vocal and guitar; Frank Moreno, accordion; Paul Romero, guitar. Recorded 20 October 1997, in Tucson, Arizona, by Jack Loeffler.

With "Máquina 501," we enter the solid world of documented history. This well-known corrido describes an event that took place on Thursday, 7 November 1907, in the Sonoran mining town of Nacozari. Jesús García, an engine driver working for Phelps-Dodge, the American company that owned both the town and the copper mines that were the reason for the town's existence, had the job of hauling supplies from downtown to an outlying mine. At around 2 PM, he started pulling his cars—including two loaded with dynamite—out of Nacozari station. A bystander noticed that one of the boxes of dynamite was on fire. Several attempts at smothering the fire did not work, and García told the rest of the crew to jump off the train. He crammed on all the steam he could, hoping to reach an unpopulated area, where he could safely abandon the engine. He didn't make it. The train barely reached the upper yard known as El Seis—Number Six—when it exploded. García was killed instantly, along with twelve other people, including women and children. Eighteen more were injured. But if García had not taken his chance and given his life, if the dynamite had exploded in the narrow confines of the canyon where the town of Nacozari was, hundreds and perhaps thousands more would have died. García's bravery was celebrated in numerous ways. The town changed its name to Nacozari de García. Monuments were erected, medals awarded, and resolutions passed, in both Mexico and the United States. November 7 is

now Mexico's National Day of the Railroader, and at least three pieces of music—a march and two corridos—were composed in García's honor.

"Máquina 501" is the more recent and popular of the two corridos. Many of its details are inaccurate. García's engine was Number Two (not 501), he was killed on a Thursday, and his fireman, José Romero, had to be ordered by García to jump. One detail is accurate, however: Jesús García was with his mother just before the fatal trip, and she is said to have urged him not to go back to work. In any case, this is the version that has been recorded in recent years, and consequently, the version that has survived to tell the world of García's bravery.

One customary stanza is missing from this performance. After the fireman announces his intention to jump off the doomed train and urges García to do the same (a conversation, we must remember, that never happened), García replies in memorable words:

Jesús García contestó:	Jesús García answered:
"Yo pienso muy diferente.	"I think very differently.
Yo no quiero ser la causa	I don't want to be the cause
de que muriera tanta gente."	of so many people dying."

It may even be that the insult to the fireman's memory was considered necessary by the composer in order to allow the hero to make his statement in true corrido form.

NOTES TO "MÁQUINA 501"

An excellent book on Jesús García is Don Deder, *In Search of Jesús García* (Payson, AZ: Prickly Pear Press, 1989). "Máquina 501" has been recorded by numerous singers and conjuntos in the past forty years. Other corridos dealing with Jesús García may be found in M. A. Serna Maytorena (1984:54) and Antonio Avitia Hernández (1997: 2: 253–255).

11. Joaquín Murrieta

Luis Méndez, vocal and guitar; Guadalupe Bracamonte, guitar. Recorded 3 March 1995, in Caborca, Sonora, by David Fisher.

According to tradition, Joaquín Murrieta was born in Fronteras, Sonora, and moved to the California goldfields around 1850. After enduring insults and cruelty at the hands of non-Hispanic miners, he turned social bandit and took revenge on *americanos* until 1852, when he is said to have been killed. What was purported to be his head was displayed in various places, before finally being lost in the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. What is truly important about Murrieta is that for many Mexicanos and Chicanos, he came to symbolize the first show of resistance to Anglo-American racism. His corrido was first recorded in 1934 by the famous Los Angeles singing group Los Hermanos Sánchez y Linares, also famous as Los Madrugadores. This recorded version, a reworking of a version said to have been composed in the 19th century by the Loroña brothers of Oquitoa, Sonora, has influenced most subsequent performances, including the present one. Sr. Méndez's version seems to be derived from the recording.

Although Murrieta achieved his fame in California, he deserves a place in this collection for several reasons. For one thing, he was a Sonoran. (The recording session with Sr. Méndez was in fact arranged with the kind assistance of one of Murrieta's relatives, Alfredo Figueroa.) Second, this corrido has been popular in Arizona for a long time. It seems to have been regarded as highly inflammatory by some members of the Anglo establishment. Mr. Figueroa told me that his great-grandfather had been thrown in jail in several Arizona mining camps for singing this song in public. This feeling seems to have lasted into recent years; in 1950, when another friend of mine first started working in Tucson as a radio announcer, his Anglo employers gave him a short list of songs that he was not to play on the air. That list included "Joaquín Murrieta."

NOTES TO "JOAQUÍN MURRIETA"

The original September 11, 1934 recording by Los Madrugadores was issued on both sides of Decca De10036. It was reissued as band 2 of *Arhoolie/Folklyric* CD 7019. Other performances appear on disc 1, band 6, and disc 2, band 1, of the two-CD set *Our Great Beginning on this Earth*, issued by Escuela de la Raza Unida, P.O. Box 910, Blythe, CA 92225. Alfredo Figueroa, the singer on the first performance in this set, lists himself as a "collateral descendant" of Joaquín Murrieta.

12. El Corrido del Palomino

Luis Méndez, vocal and guitar; Guadalupe Bracamonte, guitar. Recorded 3 March 1995 in Caborca, Sonora, by David Fisher.

This horse-race ballad may date back to the 19th century. A version appears in Acosta (1951: 85). This recording shares some of its lines with the Acosta version. The song seems to be about a well-known racehorse that would try to kill its trainers.

The tune seems to be intended to be sung—almost declaimed—without accompaniment. Like other 19th-century horse-race corridos I have encountered, the song is not strictly narrative: the action is commented upon, rather than described, as it is, for instance, in "El Moro de Cumpas," track 2 on this disc.

A note on Mexican horse colors. Since traditional Mexican horsemen feel color is an indicator of temperamental characteristics in a horse, many of the horse-race corridos mention the contestants' color. This makes translation difficult at times, as Mexican horse colors do not always have equivalents in the color system used by English-speaking horse folks. In this case, however, a palomino is a palomino.

13. El Corrido del Minero

Luis Méndez, vocal and guitar; Guadalupe Bracamonte, guitar. Recorded 3 March 1995, in Caborca, Sonora, by David Fisher.

"El Corrido del minero" ("The Miner's Corrido") may date to the early years of the 20th century. It is not a narrative, but rather reflective, commenting on the difficulties of mine work. This rare corrido appears on a recent CD recorded by Alfredo M. Figueroa, Jr., of Blythe, California. Its tune is basically the same as that used for another corrido of uncertain origin, "El General Santa Cruz," sung by Antonio Federico on track seven of this CD. At the time that Sr. Méndez recorded this song, Alfredo A. Figueroa, who introduced me to that fine singer, remarked that level 18 at the mines in Jerome, in northern Arizona, was colloquially called *la matanza* (the slaughterhouse). This is the level in the corrido's unnamed mine at which four miners had recently refused to work.

The third and fourth lines of Sr. Méndez's first stanza are somewhat unclear, and he may have garbled the words. According to Ernesto Vincochea, who says Sr. Méndez learned the song from him, this is in fact the case. I have appended two lines of Sr. Vincochea's first stanza after Sr. Méndez's version (see italicized lyrics on the disc or go to <http://www.folkways.si.edu/catalog/40475lyrics.html>).

NOTES TO "EL CORRIDO DEL MINERO"

The version sung by Alfredo M. Figueroa, Jr., on disc 1, band 7 of *Our Great Beginnings on this Earth*, is called "Triste vida del minero" ("Sad Life of the Miner"), and contains some additional verses composed by Alfredo A. Figueroa. A corrido called "El minero" was recorded in June 1936 in San Antonio, Texas, by Macario González and Fred González. It was issued on Columbia as CO4394, and reissued on the 10" Folkways LP FW6913. It is a different song from the one in this collection. Another such corrido was recorded on 7 December 1940, in Hollywood, California, by Los Madrugadores. It was issued on both the Okeh and Columbia labels as OK9371 and CO8086. I have not been able to hear it, and do not know whether or not it is related to our song.

14. Los Indios con Obregón

Luis Méndez, vocal and guitar; Guadalupe Bracamonte, guitar. Recorded 3 March 1995 in Caborca, Sonora, by David Fisher.

This corrido commemorates the beginning of the last full-scale confrontation between the Mexican army and Mexican Indians until the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. The native people involved were Yaquis, who had a long history of defending what they perceived as their sacred homeland. Yaqui troops played an important part in the Mexican Revolution; many of these men doubtless viewed their participation as laying the groundwork for greater respect on the part of the Mexican government for Yaqui land rights. However, the Yaqui homeland along the Río Yaqui in southern Sonora included choice agricultural lands, especially after the damming of the river made large-scale irrigation possible, so Mexican encroachment into Yaqui territory continued.

Ex-president Álvaro Obregón was a wealthy farmer with large landholdings to the south of Yaqui country. A native Sonoran, he had been the final victor in the complex warfare of the Mexican Revolution, and had served as President of the Republic from 1920 until 1924. He had also commanded many of the Yaqui troops who played an important role in the Revolution. On 11 September 1926, he left the border city of Nogales by train, bound for his headquarters in Huatabampo, on the Río Mayo. At Nogales, he was met by Alejo Bay and General Francisco Manzo. Bay was governor and Manzo was chief of military operations for the state of Sonora. General Manzo met with the ex-president for a while, then detrained at the seaport town of Guaymas. At Vicam Station, in the heart of Yaqui country, a group of armed Yaquis stopped Obregón's train in order, as they said, to discuss Yaqui grievances personally with the general. The Yaquis apparently expected Juan Rivera, the interpreter and private secretary to Yaqui General Luis Matus, to be on the train as well, but he had detrained in Hermosillo, the capitol of Sonora.

Obregón, apparently anticipating some sort of trouble, had meanwhile arranged a code with General Manzo, who was waiting at Ortiz, an army garrison post on the railroad line near Yaqui

country, where he was in charge of a large detachment of troops. Upon receiving the coded message, Manzo sent a heavy detachment of troops by train to Vicam. As this relief train arrived at Vicam Station, shooting erupted. According to some accounts, the train ran over an explosive charge of the sort that indicates that another train is stopped on the track ahead. The troops, hearing the explosion, thought they were being fired upon and responded in kind. The Yaquis retreated from Vicam, and Obregón was freed. As the train continued on its way out of Yaqui country, the Mexican soldiers are said to have continued shooting at any Yaquis they saw. A year of Mexican-Yaqui conflict ensued.

One version of this song was recorded commercially in the 1970s, and at least three more were collected from performances in Sonora in the closing decades of the 20th century. The song seems to have a rather fluid title; it is also known as "El Corrido de Obregón" and "Vicom Pueblo."

NOTES TO "LOS INDIOS CON OBREGÓN"

For more information concerning this corrido, see James S. Griffith, "'Los Indios con Obregón,' A Sonoran Corrido," in *The Journal of Arizona History*, 37 (4, Winter 1996): 369–376. The song also appears as "Vicom Pueblo" in M. A. Serna Maytorena 1984 (118–20), and in Antonio Avitia Hernández, *Corrido histórico mexicano*, vol. 4 (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1998), pp. 19–21. It is recorded as side B, band 3, of the LP *Eduardo Fierro, "El caporal"* (Discos Cisne CI-2237).

15. Canal del Infiernillo

Los Ribereños del Golfo: Crecencio Ayala, vocal and accordion; Rosario Aguirre, vocal and guitar; Gregorio Ramírez, bajo sexto; Víctor Manuel Velarde, *tololoche*. Recorded 18 January 1997, in Bahía Kino, Sonora, by Jack Loeffler.

Rosario Aguirre, guitarist and vocalist for the conjunto Los Ribereños del Golfo, composed this

corrido about an incident he was involved in. He and his friends Manuel, Chino, Chinicuila, and El Pelón (the last three are nicknames) were fishing in their *panga* (open boat), when a group of Seri Indians grabbed both boat and fishermen. As with many corridos, it was important to include the names of everyone involved in the song. One possible reason for this is that if the individual involved is shown in a good light, he may well pay to have the song sung at celebrations.

As for the other individuals named in the song, Gustavo Gastelum was a fishery inspector, Alfredo Topete was a Mexican who operated a store in the Seri community of Punta Chueca, and Gutiérrez Rico was owner of the icehouse in the Mexican fishing community of Kino Viejo or "Old Kino." There are two side-by-side towns at Kino Bay: the resort and vacation community of Bahía Kino, strung out along a beautiful beach, and Kino Viejo, where the fishermen and other working-class people live.

Birds act as messengers in many cultures—the expression in English "a little bird told me" comes to mind. In the case of this corrido and "Corrido del Guasiado," the bird asked to fly away with the news is not a little dove (as it so often is in corridos), but *una gaviotita*, or a little seagull—a lovely local touch indeed.

16. El Corrido del Guasiado

Los Ribereños del Golfo: Crecencio Ayala, vocal and accordion; Rosario Aguirre, vocal and guitar; Gregorio Ramírez, bajo sexto; Víctor Manuel Velarde, *tololoche*. Recorded 18 January 1997 in Bahía Kino, Sonora, by Jack Loeffler.

This corrido tells about an incident that happened in the 1950s. Despite warnings from older and more experienced fishermen, two young men went off net-fishing near Kino Bay. José and Miguel were the young men; an older man from Kino Viejo named José el Guacho advised them to stay, but they went anyway to tend their nets at nearby Alcatraz Island. Several days later, José's mother-in-law, Doña Chuy (short for Jesucita), became worried and went to the port captain, who tried to

reassure her. The body of one of the missing men was found, washed up on the beach, by a marine engine mechanic from Kino Viejo named Carlos Prieto. This song, written by a local man with the nickname of "El Maseca," is their memorial.

For Further Reading or Listening

A basic collection of traditional corridos is Vicente T. Mendoza, *El corrido mexicano* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Colección Popular 139, 1954). Sonora and Arizona corridos are included in Vicente Acosta, *Some Surviving Elements of Spanish Folklore in Arizona* (M.A. thesis, University of Arizona, 1951) and M.A. Serna Maytorena, *En Sonora así se cuenta: Sonora en el Corrido y el Corrido en Sonora* (Hermosillo: Gobierno del Estado de Sonora y Secretaría de Fomento Educativo y Cultura, 1984). An excellent collection of early recorded corridos from the U.S.-Mexico border is Arhoolie/Folklyric 7019-7020, *Corridos y Tragedias de la Frontera*, a two-CD set which contains a 167-page booklet by Phillip Sonnichsen and James Nicolopolos.

CREDITS

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The Caborca session was recorded by Dave Fisher and "Sky" Crosby of Tucson. The other sessions were all recorded by my dear friend Jack Loeffler of Santa Fe. All three of these talented men offered their services gratis. Also present at various recording sessions were my wife, Loma Griffith, Richard Morales, Gary Nabhan, and Lauri Monti. My thanks go to them all. Bernard Fontana of Tucson told me the story of Patsy Sutton at the Battle of Nogales. Francisco Manzo Taylor of Hermosillo, Sonora, offered expert advice and information concerning his grandfather, General Francisco Manzo. Enrique Lamadrid of Santa Fe and Celestino Fernández of Tucson did the hard work of transcription and translation. I did just enough to be able to claim as my own whatever errors there may be. David Burkhalter made the black-and-white prints.

Finally, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the singers and musicians who have cherished and performed these corridos, and who graciously allowed us to record them. To a man, they greeted the project with enthusiasm, and each one helped all he could.

Jim Griffith, 2002

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