

## Woolford's Tales

# Folklore Story to Remember

By SAM WOOLFORD

In recording the recollections of many of the "viejos" in our great Southwest I have always been interested in the unexplored background of the Francisco Madero revolution which took wings one summer night in San Antonio in 1910, and ended the dictatorial reign of Porfirio Diaz forever.

Many of my readers, including myself, followed the progress of the Mexican Revolution after that night when the vanguard rode in hired San Antonio hacks southward, out past the old missions toward the Rio Grande, got into saddles and invaded their own native land to throw off the yoke of Spain which Diaz had clung to despite two previous revolutions.

They opened the door for others - Pancho Villa, Carranza, Zapata, Obregon, Huerta, Calles, for the next ten years.

I have always felt this phase of southwestern history was neglected by researchers but I am sure for good reasons, as most of the pre-Madero material was unrecorded. But in the last few days I have been reading some recorded notes and come out with a most astounding piece of folklore which I feel I must share with you.

Mama Panchita Amalla Jasso lives with her son, Chris, at 613 Delaware Street. She was born in Nuevo Laredo Nov. 20, 1880. She will be 94 years old next fall. She spent her childhood on a ranch forty miles southwest of Nuevo Laredo.

Chris says: "I live with my mother and after our noon meal we sit around and reminisce about the old days."

He hands me some notes he has typed. And here is what I read:

"We were talking about the easy way housewives today have of pushing a button. Around the turn of the century, 1901, when she was a bride and living at the ranch she had an 'AUTOMATIC DISH WASHING MACHINE' that was more efficient than those of today."

This is where I feel I must share my research with those of you who may question whether my eyesight is failing.

Says her son:

"Out on this isolated ranch southwest of Nuevo Laredo one day Mama Panchita discovered she had neighbors, four Apache families who kept very much to themselves.

### Talked in Hand Signs

"One day out of sheer desperation the Indian mother came over for a visit. With hand signs and broken Spanish she made Mama understand she wanted to borrow the metate (Boiled Corn Hand Grinder).

"Mama being a good neighbor not only let her borrow the metate but gave her a fresh cheese, a piece of corn bread and a piloncillo brown sugar cone for the kids. In those days there was no welfare or social help. Neighbors just helped each other the best they could.

"Mother says that one day early in November before I was born, Father went to Nuevo Laredo in the buckboard for supplies and bought a new hand mill to grind boiled corn. Mother was delighted. It was going to be a lot easier to prepare the corn dough to make the tortillas.

"Next time the old Indian came over Mother told her the metate was hers to keep forever. She let out a whoop, danced a little jig and promised Mother

she would pay it all back somehow.

"One cold day, while mother was busy, before she knew it there the Apaches were in front of her. Mother says they move so quickly and quietly, take advantage of all cover that you never see them until they want to.

### Dropped a Fat Deer

"A young buck son, six feet tall, dropped a fat deer on the ground for us their neighbors to eat. Then the Apache mother pulled from under her blouse the biggest 'bull horn' we had ever seen. She explained that if we ever needed help to have someone blow the big horn and help would come at once."

Now I'm talking.

The wild cattle that grazed the endless stretches of the border country grew these tremendous horns and when tongued by a strong winded vaquero they made a noise across the desert something like a tug boat dragging an ocean going vessel into a foggy port. And Uncle Pancho was the man who could blow it, combination blacksmith for the ranch, trainer of bulls for the corrida.

In those days, preceding the 1910 revolution, this border country was the scene of dangerous men, smugglers of ammunition and rifles for the coming revolution, the Rurales of the federales ever on the alert to catch and kill them.

Now about Panchita's breakfast table outside. The men ate breakfast and supper at home but the noon meal was always eaten on the range. This gave Mama Panchita a chance to get her house in order and she didn't mind cooking but that breakfast table full of dirty dishes outside the kitchen under the thatched roof was enough to discourage a veteran housewife, let alone a timid young bride.

That's where Uncle Pancho comes in. One day smugglers came in after the ranch crew had left the house for the day. The head man ordered "Huevos ranchero" for his crew of four horsemen, with long bales of blankets hiding rifles, of course. She set new dishes, cooked the eggs and served a second breakfast. Then he told his men to snake out a couple of blankets to pay her. No sooner had they ridden out, when dust arose at the bars to the rancho and in comes her Godfather, captain of the Rurales who had been trailing the smugglers. She had hidden the blankets. In these dangerous days it was every man for himself and she didn't want to offend either one by telling on the other. So she sat out the coffee and tortillas and you must have known what the outside breakfast table looked like by this time when they rode out.

Then Uncle Pancho comes into action. He lifts the bull horn to his lips and blows a certain set of secret signals. Soon across the lonely desert-like landscape at a dead gallop comes two Apache maidens, their hair streaming out behind them, riding this Indian pony bareback, pull up and dash to the dirty dishes and in a lightning scurry of buckets of water soon had, the table spick and span, dishes put away and waited, all smiles as Uncle Pancho and Mama came out with the piloncillos, which was Uncle Pancho's secret code for "MAMA PANCHITAS 1902 AUTOMATIC DISH WASHERS. HELP.

They were of course Lipan Apaches and had been quartered in the Alamo Mission but ran away. They are not to be confused with the Mescaleros Apaches, or the White Mountain Apaches of Arizona.