

**The Journal of the  
Hillsboro Historical Society**

**Vol. 16 No. 4**

**Sierra County, New Mexico**

**November 2023**

**The Rubios of Hillsboro**

By Joe and Karla Britton



Lonnie Rubio and Margie Rubio Weiche.  
Photo courtesy Carol Mendez.

For generations, the Rubio family has had a prominent presence in Sierra County and Hillsboro in particular.<sup>1</sup> Any resident of the town is familiar with Lonnie, Jr., and his late sister Margie. First thing in the morning, whenever the General Store is open, Lonnie makes his way to the cafe in his blue Ford F150 to take his place at the front table to join friends for coffee and conversation. And while she was still alive, Margie’s resolute walks around town, on her way to see about something or someone, were just part of the daily street scene of Hillsboro.

***Juan Rubio (“Grandpa Juan”)***

The Rubio family, however, encompasses many more local figures than just this brother and sister. The Rubios first appeared in the area when Longino Rubio, born in 1850 in Mexico, came with his Juarez-born wife, Nestora Martinez Gonzales (1854-1886), to the Mimbres Valley sometime after the American Civil War. There they raised a family of six children, including the fifth child Juan (1884-1959), from whom the Rubios of Hillsboro are descended. Juan married Guadalupe (Lupe) V. Anaya (1881-1965) in Arrey, who was born in the Manzano Mountains at Chilili, and was half Apache. They in turn had seven

children of their own: Lonjino (1904-1996), Emma (1911-1932), Teresita (1911-1926), Abelardo (1915-1974), Estefana (1917-1982), Carmen (1920-?), and Guadalupe (1924-2000).

“Grandpa Juan,” as Lonnie, Jr., calls him, had a little farm in Las Perchas near what is now the Caballo Dam, on the west side of the river, where most of their children were born. Because they had trouble making it financially, Juan went looking for work, ending up at the Santa Rita copper mine. He soon worked his way into being a foreman, and as Lonnie describes him, “he was an excellent powder man.” He and Lupe bought a house in Santa Clara, and they lived their life out there after he retired from the mine. He had a big garden—a spin off from his former farming days—and they passed vegetables along to their neighbors, helping to establish a long tradition in the family of being helpful to others. Lonnie comments, “You hear these old timers tell you something, and you think they’re crazy. But let me tell you, they’ve been down the road you’re going on.”

*(continued on page 3 ...)*

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based in part on a conversation between Karla Britton and Lonnie Rubio, Jr. on June 11, 1922, and a conversation between Joe Britton and Carol Rubio Mendez on September 19, 2023. Our thanks to them both for their willingness to share the story of their family.

## President's Message



Another year streaks past us! I have enjoyed being in the President's shoes for the Hillsboro Historical Society Board again this year.

Each year we set goals to guide us and to help us stay on track. As 2023 nears its end, I note our positive accomplishments on long-

term goals:

- Our Black Range Museum volunteer team has been stable and very dedicated this year – they consistently kept the museum open to visitors Friday, Saturdays and Sundays each week.
- We sponsored our 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the *Día de los Muertos*. Events included a special presenter, paper flowers, masks, ofrendas, and *pan de muertos* workshops, culminating in a celebration on November 4 with a procession to the Hillsboro Cemetery, decoration of graves with paper flowers, and a beautiful community dinner.
- We accomplished more toward development of our backyard space at the Black Range Museum. We are very near to finalizing plans on a new building for the Mountain Pride coach. Much earthwork and clean up has also been completed to ready the space for our next steps.
- We met some setbacks with jail stabilization, but we do have expertise and specific plans in place for how the wall stabilization will be approached in 2024.
- We continued our Oral History program.
- We provided a number of community presentations, held at the Community Center, with topics ranging from Spanish Barb horses, to a “road story” of Highway 152, and the Magdalena Stock Driveway. Members of our board and other volunteers also presented papers at the 2023 New Mexico History Conference in

Silver City, sponsored by the Historical Society of New Mexico.

- Our displays committee has completed research for expansion of our medical room display at the Black Range Museum. This new display will be opening in 2024.
- We continued the periodic cleanup of Highways 152 and 27 through Hillsboro.
- We produced four quarterly issues of this professional, unique and informative *GZP* journal. Your membership benefit!

So many hours given by our dedicated volunteers make this all happen. As for me, this will be my last year as the HHS Board President. I have enjoyed this opportunity to serve, and will continue on the board as a member if elected for 2024.

I look forward to a full and successful year ahead.  
**Please rejoin us!**

--Nichole Trushell  
HHS Board President

**Watch the mail for your 2024 membership form and the 2024 board election ballot (or use the form at the end of this journal to renew your membership). We hope you will return these promptly and be part of another great year at the HHS.**

**Bring a friend as a new member! Please consider asking a friend or neighbor if they might wish to join the HHS this year. Direct contacts with potential new members is the *best* way to broaden our membership. And memberships also make *great gifts!***

**CHRISTMAS  
IN THE FOOTHILLS**

**Saturday, December 2, 2023**

**10 am – 4 pm**

**Hillsboro**

*Presented by the Hillsboro Community Center*

(... continued from page 1)

### **Lonjino Analla Rubio (“Lonnie, Sr.”)**



Lonnie Rubio, Sr. Photo from a political ad, 1969. Black Range Museum.

Lonnie, the oldest child of Juan and Lupe, was born in Cuchillo. He began his working career at the age of nine, employed as a water boy on the Elephant Butte Dam project. In addition to providing water to the other workers, he also totes heavy sacks of cement during the dam building.

Lonnie married Clotilde (Tillie) Bojorquez (1914-1961), daughter of the great Sierra County cowboy and sheriff, Francisco M. Bojorquez (see page 8). One source says the wedding was in 1932, but another says it was when she was only 15, which would have been in 1929. In any case, at the time of their marriage, Lonnie was working on a 900-acre farm along the Rio Grande owned by Frank Worden.<sup>2</sup> The Worden family attended the wedding, which Frank’s son Bob recalled was memorable for the good time and good food. After Lonnie had worked on the farm for three years, the Wordens decided to sell it, but Lonnie continued to farm 79 acres of it himself: 18 acres of barley, 18 acres of cotton, and a truck garden. He pedaled vegetables, fruits, and eggs—including trips to Hillsboro where he had to compete with the many farms in Happy Flats. One lady, however, who had an ill husband, made a point of coming early to his stand by the Percha Creek so she could be assured of getting his fresh eggs before he sold out.

Making a living on the farm, however, was hard and Lonnie also began to look for other opportunities, including with the Highway Department. Not surprisingly, highway jobs were political, and Frank Worden and other influential friends got him a job. He moved with his wife Tillie to Hillsboro in June of 1933 to take up the job of Supervisor of the local Department of Highways office, just as the Black Range Highway was being completed over the pass. His role therefore on that road was maintenance, rather than construction.

The Rubio family lived at the corner of Third and Elenora Streets, where their two adobe houses still stand. Lonnie and Tillie’s family eventually consisted of five children: Lonnie, Jr. (b. 1937), Francis (b. 1940), twins Rosie and Patsy (b. 1947), and Margaret (Margie, 1948-2022). Carol Mendez, Lonnie, Sr.’s granddaughter, recalls that when she was growing up, Lonnie lived by himself in “the big house” on the Rubio property (after her grandmother died), while she lived with her parents, Lonnie, Jr. and his wife Charlotte, in the smaller of the two houses. The Rubios also owned the property across the street, including a workshop shed, car repair well, and a gas pump for their own use.

As Supervisor, Lonnie was responsible for 82 miles of the roads stretching out in all directions from Hillsboro: State Highway 90 (now 152) east and west, and Highway 27 south. In addition to overseeing regular maintenance and snow plowing, he was also a watchman over the roads’ travelers. For instance, an *Albuquerque Journal* article from February 25, 1943, reported that it was Lonnie who found the wreckage of an ore truck driven by A.B. Horn of Albuquerque, which had been missing for five days. Lonnie spotted the truck in a 50-foot ravine off the highway over Emory Pass, in a spot not visible from the road. He won numerous recognitions from the Highway Department for his work: he was given such awards as a 100,000 mile Safe Driving Award (1958), Ten Year Safety Award (1968), and an Accident Free Award (1969). He retired after 40 years with the Highway Department in 1969.



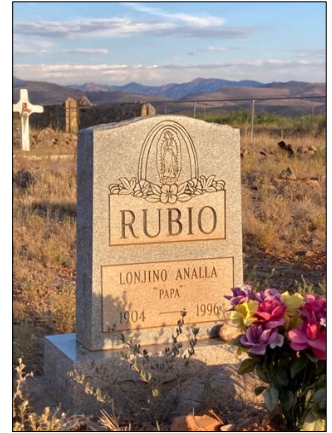
The Rubio homes in Hillsboro: the “little house” on the right and the “big house” on the left. Photo Joe Britton.

<sup>2</sup> For more about Frank Worden, see *GZP* 14/3, August 2021.

Nell Thwaites, who in 1987 collected a typewritten series of “Interviews with Old-Timers from Hillsboro” for the town’s centennial, writes of her conversation with Lonnie: “He is remembered as being one of the most accommodating and efficient highwaymen ever. Nearly every citizen can recall being saved one way or another from a snowbank, a rising creek, and being pulled out of the mud.” Lonnie was also active in the social life of the town, serving as manager of the baseball team, the Sierra Browns.<sup>3</sup> A registered Democrat, in 1969 he nonetheless supported Doyal Ray Gillespie, a Republican candidate for County Commissioner, as quoted in an ad: “Roads were my obligation but being with the people was my pleasure. The road part is now over, but I am still with the people. Thank you for cooperating with me.”

Tillie Rubio died in November 1961, 35 years before her husband, and is buried beside her pioneer father in the Hillsboro cemetery. Lonnie nevertheless remained active even after his retirement in 1969, and was always full of stories he was eager to share. As Thwaites concluded her account of their 1987 interview, “Today he can be seen pattering around his properties. He is a busy man and he is also blessed by a loving family ... who see to his needs and comforts. He can talk highway talk with his son Lonnie, Jr., who followed in his dad’s footsteps. Each evening Lonnie sits on the wall, streetside, and reads his newspaper. When darkness begins to fall, he says he can watch the many ‘nice’ people of the Hillsboro and surrounding area (of his memories) take shape before him and parade back and forth, and as one who has found time to stop and sit with Lonnie ‘a spell,’ I can assure you it is a most ‘memorable’ and uplifting experience.”

Lonnie died in December 1996 after a month-long illness, and is also buried in the Hillsboro cemetery. The epigraph on his headstone simply reads, “Papa”.



Grave of Lonjino Analla Rubio, Hillsboro Cemetery. Photo Joe Britton.

### ***Lonnie Lee Rubio (“Lonnie, Jr.”)***



Lonnie Rubio, Jr., 2022. Photo Karla Britton.

As Lonnie, Jr.’s daughter Carol observes, he is someone “who talks in stories,” whether drawn out of his wide knowledge of the folklore of the Southwest such as the chupacabra, or from his own life experience. He recalls, for instance, how when he was a child riding the school bus into Truth or Consequences, Clarence Wilson, the driver, remarked to him one day, “Funny you don’t know anything about horses. Your grandfather Frank Bojorquez was an excellent cowboy.” Lonnie laughs as if to confirm the observation, “Give me six inches of rope and I’ll hang myself, I get so tangled up.”

He remembers that when he was growing up his family was poor, “but that didn’t isolate us,” he says. “We were all in the same way, so we didn’t think anything about it.” His father taught him the value of hard work: “He kept me busy all the time. You had to put in a day’s work, and then come back home to chop and stack wood.”

Lonnie went to school in Hillsboro for the first six years, where his mother helped out by preparing lunch with food donated by local residents. Then for junior and senior high he was transferred to school in Truth or Consequences. His first experience working on the roads came during high school, when he was asked by the Highway Department even as a teenage boy to fill in temporarily for his dad, who needed to have surgery.

Following graduation, Lonnie intended to go into the army. “I didn’t have any sense,” he notes. “So I registered for the draft, but they turned me down. ‘We’ll call you when we need you,’ they said.” Two years later they did call, but by then he had suffered an on-the-job injury of a broken sternum and so was no longer eligible.

<sup>3</sup> For more about the Sierra Browns, see Lynn Tittmann Mullins, “Baseball and Civil Law in Early Hillsboro—Judge, Jury and Umpire,” *GZP* 12/3 (August 2019).

That injury happened while Lonnie was working for the Highway Department, where he started in August 1956. Initially he worked for thirteen and a half years in District 1, which was most of southwestern New Mexico. "I mainly rebuilt roads," Lonnie says, "rather than constructing them." Nevertheless, a maintenance supervisor whose nickname was Snort sent him to work on a crew in Reserve, where they were putting through a road to the south. It didn't take Lonnie long to work into the operator ranks. As his supervisor observed, using the crew's nickname for him, "Poncho's a good blade operator, a good loader man, and a good truck driver." His ability to learn from and get along with other people had a big role in this advancement. As he explained, "I worked with a lot of capable and experienced people, and I learned a lot from them. And some I liked and some I didn't like, but because we had to be a family eight hours a day, I just buried my thoughts and feelings."

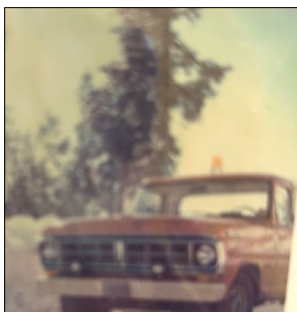
Lonnie honed his skills with a mail course on operating heavy equipment, and then in 1961 went to Champaign, Illinois to train at the International Equipment proving grounds. When he returned to New Mexico he began operating a power shovel served by 14 dump trucks. "I was at the top of the operator line," he says proudly. "But now I probably sound like I'm bragging."

An opportunity came Lonnie's way to move from the construction crew to a desk job in the district office, but he turned it down. "That was the biggest funny farm in New Mexico without a fence around it. The guys from Santa Fe just didn't have the practical experience they needed." Lonnie also had a very strong sense of responsibility about his job. "I felt that I didn't work for the Highway Department," he said. "I worked for the public. They were the ones who paid my wage." And he purposely didn't drink: "The public had a right to know that when I responded to an accident or emergency, I wouldn't be half lit up." His sense of community responsibility radiated beyond his job as well. "I tried to be there for our neighbors when they needed help, even if I didn't see eye to eye with them."

In addition to the broken sternum, Lonnie suffered some other serious injuries. He was once in a bad accident, when a truck he was riding in rolled over. That accident took him a long time to recover from, but he was still determined not to go into an office job but to return to the highway work crew. He also had opportunities to work elsewhere, including Saudi Arabia and Latin America, but he always chose to remain in New Mexico. "I liked living in a small town and I wanted to raise my kids here. I knew I could count on the fact that if we saw somebody's kids acting up, we didn't mind getting abrasive with them, in a nice way."

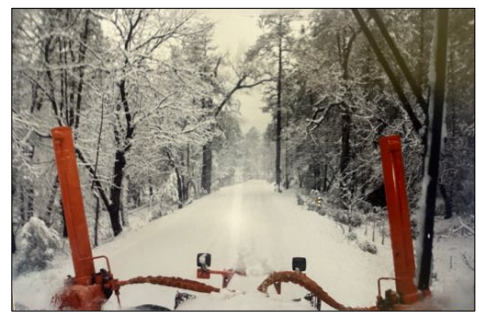
Lonnie also trained to handle dynamite and other explosives. Asked if he found that work scary, he wryly remarked, "Well, it's no worse than driving down the highway. At least you learn not to make a mistake, because if you do, it'll probably be your last one. So you're careful."

In 1964, Lonnie married Charlotte Keele. She was from Waco, Texas, and her parents had a house in Hillsboro (the home now owned by Harley Shaw and Patti Woodruff). The Keeles later moved to the adobe just west of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (the former law office of Edward Tittmann). Lonnie and Charlotte had three children: Carol (b. 1967), Diana (b. 1976), and Michael (b. 1979). Following the 1972 flood, Lonnie and Charlotte moved from the "small house" on the Rubio property, and built a new home at the corner of Main and Fifth Streets, where Lonnie continues to live. Lonnie and Charlotte eventually divorced, and sometime thereafter he married Donna Springsteen. She was from Las Cruces, but her parents also lived in town, on the other side of the creek. Donna died in 2002, and is buried in Hillsboro Cemetery.



Lonnie's orange highway truck. Photo courtesy Carol Mendez.

When Lonnie, Sr. retired from the Highway Department in 1969, Lonnie, Jr. managed to succeed his father in the Hillsboro post. As a newspaper article observed, "Possibly the only section of roadways in the state maintained and supervised by a father and son team, Hwy. 90 and Hwy. 27 can boast of their notorious highwaymen ..." The article continued by noting that the job entailed being "on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Lonnie, like his father before him, has seen every



The view out of Lonnie's snowplow. Photo courtesy Carol Mendez.

possible road condition this Southwestern corner of Sierra County can produce, from the flooded flat country to the 8,000 ft. plus iced and snow-covered highways of the Gila National Forest area.” Carol Mendez confirms this perspective, saying “Lonnie was always in an orange truck, with a thermos of coffee and lunch.” He often worked all night plowing snow; he plowed out the creek crossings to Lake Valley after the rains; and he always kept the road clear for the school bus. In an email, Carol wrote, “As far as Daniel, Dianna, Michael and I are concerned, we each share the appreciation that Lonnie taught us the value of respect and hard work. Each of us continues to respect and admire his work ethic and motivation to get out and do something. He worked hard all his life for us so that we would always have a home. Hillsboro will always be home to us as well.”



Lonnie Rubio's retirement party at the Hillsboro Community Center, 1999. Photo courtesy Gloria Spellman.

Like his father, Lonnie was honored with numerous Highway Department awards. At 35 years in the Department, he received recognition for his many years of service—and as it turned out he still had eight more to go! Lonnie finally retired in 1999, after 43 and a half years. A well-attended retirement party was held at the Community Center, where residents had the chance to thank him for his vigilance all those many years. Nowadays, watching the Highway Department trucks passing by, Lonnie feels like it's a totally different world from the one he knew. A bit skeptically he observes, “Those orange trucks go through town, and they've got air conditioning, radios, the whole nine yards.” And he notes how the change in weather has affected the work of the road crews. “Back when I started in 1969, we'd often have to plow the road on the mountain before Halloween, but they don't now. One winter, 1972 I think it was, we had 10 – 12 feet of snow up there.” Lonnie still loves to operate equipment when he can: you might see him around Hillsboro atop his handsome orange tractor digging a hole with its attached backhoe, or scraping something up with his Bobcat loader—whatever he can do to be helpful.

As a gift to honor Lonnie's long career, at the time of his retirement friends had two street signs made for him that now mark the intersection where his house is located: “Lonnie L. Rubio Ave” and “43 Years Blvd”.



The “street sign” at the corner of Main and Fifth Streets, Hillsboro. Photo Joe Britton.

### ***Margaret Sue Rubio Weiche (“Margie”)***



Margie Rubio's high school senior portrait. Photo courtesy Carol Mendez.

Margie was born in 1948 in the “big house” on her parents' property. Although years later she spent some time in California with her son Daniel, she never really left Hillsboro. It was truly her home: as her niece Carol Mendez notes, she loved the beauty and comfort of the mountains and hills, green or dry. “Margie would say, ‘Hillsboro hugs me.’”

In her high school yearbook, Margie was described as “Pleasant, well-mannered,” and along with a boy named Narcico Cardona she was given the title of “Shyest” member of the class. But Margie also had strong opinions: share a piece of news with her that she disapproved of, and you would get a hearty, “O good Lord!” In 1975 Margie married Jack Weiche, who worked in the mine. They had one child, Daniel (b. 1979), who grew up in Hillsboro and then served in both the Marines and Army. Margie and Jack later divorced, though he had not been around much for several years. She and her son lived in the “little house” until Lonnie, Sr. died in 1996. They then moved into the “big house,” where Margie continued to reside for 26 years. She was just preparing to move into the old work shed across the street, which her family had lovingly renovated for her into a new home, when she died suddenly on April 12, 2022. She, too, is buried in the Hillsboro cemetery, where her headstone reads, “Mom, Grandma, Sister, Aunt & Friend”.

Lonnie and Margie, brother and sister, were very close, looking out for one another. And Margie and Carol, aunt and niece, were especially close, even “best friends,” as Carol says. “We often talked by phone two or three times a day.” Margie’s son Daniel and Carol’s brother Michael are the same age, “so Margie and I spent a lot of time together helping with the two boys.”



“Margie’s Way” (Third Street), Hillsboro. Photo Joe Britton.

Wherever Margie went in town, she always walked. In fact, the memory of her coming down Third Street on her way somewhere led some citizens after her death to suggest renaming the street “Margie’s Way.” Although the County Commissioners demurred on the suggestion, that name is nevertheless now fixed in many people’s minds.

*(A note from the authors: As Margie’s neighbors, we especially remember her for the generous spirit with which she*

always greeted us. Coming to Hillsboro inevitably meant sharing gifts with her of some sort—perhaps just a rose from the garden, or a loaf of fresh bread, or even a pot of red chili as a special treat. Often, it was something sweet, because she had a real sweet tooth. She would come over to our house for a few minutes—never very long—but long enough for us to exchange our gifts, share a bit of news, and inquire after our mutual families. And then she would be off, on to her next errand.)

Around Hillsboro, Margie was well known for the attention she gave both to the town and to many of the people in it. Like her brother, she too learned the value of hard work from their father. She worked as a caretaker for elderly residents, and looked after several homes and gardens. Her weed-whacker was legendary: she kept the town looking trim, especially by cutting the weeds around Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. She often stopped in at the church, and a white memorial cross with her name now graces one of the red front doors. Margie loved tending her garden, and she was an avid hunter for cactus to plant in it. Recognizing Margie’s love of gardening, a small memorial garden has been created around a sign in Percha Creek Park. The sign reads: “Friendships aren’t measured by time they’re measured by the size of the imprint they leave on your heart.”

An anonymous poem appeared on the town bulletin board soon after Margie’s death that expresses well both the community’s sense of loss and its admiration for her:

Farewell Lil’ Margie  
Whenever you walked  
Peace followed in your wake  
Wherever you are now  
Keep walking  
The world needs your peace

Margie Rubio Weiche’s headstone, Hillsboro Cemetery (left), and memorial cross on the front door of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (right). Photos Joe Britton.



Narcico Cardona and Margie Rubio: shyest members of the senior class. Photo courtesy Gloria Spellman.



Sign in the memorial garden, Percha Creek Park, Hillsboro. Photo Joe Britton.

## Francisco Bojorquez: Sierra County's Legendary Sheriff

By Karl W. Laumbach

*One of Lonnie Rubio's stories is related to his maternal grandfather, Francisco M. Bojorquez. "I didn't know him—he died before I was born—but I knew people who did," recalls Lonnie. "In the mid '60s I run into somebody up in Winston, and he asked me if I'd been in the area long. I said, 'Yeh,' I says, 'I was born and raised in Sierra County and my family is more or less from here.' And he said, 'Who would you be related to?' And I said, 'Well, Juan Rubio was my granddad on my dad's side,' and then I says, 'My granddad on my mother's side was Francisco Bojorquez.' And he said, 'I can't believe you said I'm sittin' here talkin' to Francisco Bojorquez's grandson! He was a truly interesting person!"*

*Telling the story of the Rubios, therefore, would not be complete without also telling the story of this legendary man, whose daughter Clotilde married into the Rubio family. For the task of recounting the life of Francisco Bojorquez, we turn to an article by Karl Laumbach, originally published in Archeology Southwest 18/2 (Spring 2004), expanded here with additional information from a talk he gave in 2018 as part of the Culture Series at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Museum in Las Cruces. Published by permission. [--Ed.]*



Francisco M. Bojorquez. This photo is included with the article about him in the 1979 *History of Sierra County*. Photo courtesy of Karl Laumbach.

One person of the Southwest whose story deserves to be remembered is Francisco (Frank) M. Bojorquez, the legendary sheriff of Sierra County. Until recently, much of what is known about him was contained only in yellowing newspaper columns and the memories of some local *viejitos* (old-timers).

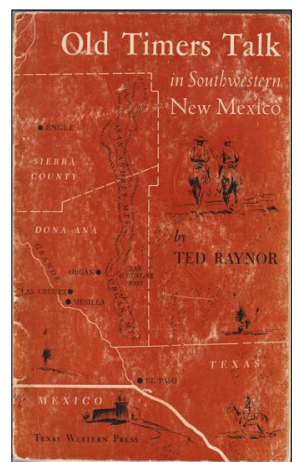
My interest in Bojorquez began in the 1980s when I came across *Old Timers Talk in Southwestern New Mexico*, a collection of newspaper columns edited by Ted Raynor.<sup>4</sup> In the chapter, "A Great Cowboy," longtime Sierra County rancher and cowboy Bob Martin is quoted as saying of Bojorquez, "He was the top of all the cowpunchers I have ever seen and I have seen hundreds of the tops."<sup>5</sup> To illustrate this assessment, the chapter contains the following description of Bojorquez in action:

One of Bojorquez' feats on the range occurred below Las Palomas along the Rio Grande, where the wild cattle grazed at night in the open and laid up in the bosque during the day. Martin witnessed the feat. He said:

"To see Bojorquez in action when speed, accuracy and perfect timing were of the essence, let me describe one for you.

"Picture three big steers running down a rough, rocky gravel canyon. Bojorquez was nearest to them, of four or five men, and the steers within a few hundred yards of the thick bosque.

"Bojorquez ropes the first one he gets to by one horn, throws the rope over and around the hips and piles him up in a knot as he goes by without checking speed. Somewhere in this operation the rope will get a bit of slack and slip off the horn. Not having time to coil his rope and make a loop until he overtakes the



Cover of Ted Raynor's *Old Timers Talk* (1960).

<sup>4</sup> Ted Raynor, *Old Timers Talk in Southwestern New Mexico* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1960). Raynor, a resident of Mesilla, wrote in his Foreword: "New Mexico is very old and very young. ... There are an infinite number of stories about people and places of an earlier New Mexico still waiting to be told. Most of the old-timers are not difficult to approach. I found they have an intellectual integrity in talking about the past. They tell me what happened to the best of their recollection and they like to stick to reality."

<sup>5</sup> For more about cowboy and rancher Bob Martin, see *GZP* 14/1, February 2021.



second steer, he grabs his tail, takes a turn around the saddle horn, goes by the steer and he is piled up on the ground. Then onto the third steer which he ropes and ties.”

With this breathless description in mind, I began to find and interview individuals who either had known Bojorquez, who were related to Bojorquez, or who had worked with his friends. As Bojorquez died in 1920, those who knew him were in short supply by 1990. Their stories, coupled with archival and literature research and illuminated by documents, artifacts, and photographs held by family and friends, have provided the information in this article.

Bojorquez, a *vaquero* from Baja California, was born in 1865 to Lawrence and Jesusita Bojorquez, who emigrated from Barcelona, Spain in 1840. He was educated in Sonora, and then came to New Mexico in the 1880s. The exact date of his arrival is unknown but 1885 is a reasonable compromise. We know he was working on the Aleman Ranch by 1889. It was there that the famed cowboy author Eugene Manlove Rhodes took notice of him, commenting that “Bojorquez was our best, he looked like Messala in *Ben Hur*.” By 1890 Bojorquez was working for Col. Willard Hopewell of the Grayson Ranch, also known as the John Cross or Ladder Ranch. His skills quickly advanced him to the position of wagon boss where he had the respect and admiration of the “tradition bound” Texas cowboys.

So great was his skill with rope and horse that, in a few short years, he was foreman of the largest ranch in Sierra County. I had the opportunity to talk to some of the viejitos who knew Bojorquez. One claimed that Bojorquez could make a wild horse tame and a tame horse wild just by talking to it. Another old-timer recalled Bojorquez building a large spinning loop with his rope and walking his horse through the loop. In one saddle bronc competition he bet that he could place a silver dollar in each stirrup before his ride and that the coins would still be under his boots when he finished. Bojorquez won the bet.

In September 1890, Bojorquez won top prize money at an Albuquerque rodeo by winning the heavy steer roping contest and placing second in the bucking horse category. Historian John Baxter claims the honor of first recognizing the exploits of Bojorquez at this Territorial Fair. Bojorquez, he said, took “all around” honors at that event’s Cowboy Contest. This feat solidified his fame as the competitors were the best working cowboys from Arizona and New Mexico. As the Albuquerque *Morning Democrat* documented the event: “Right here the band should have played ‘Hail to the Chief’ for F.M. Bojorques [sic] is entitled to that designation for one year. He works for the Grayson Cattle Company, Sierra County, and his employers may well feel proud of him. Away went the steer and Bojorques threw the rope and missed. It was now a question of speed, but the pony was quick, and soon its rider was alongside his victim. Another throw and success crowned the efforts of Bojorques, for he roped and tied the big beef in just 1:54. This was the fastest time in the tournament.”

And in 1912, at the age of 47, Bojorquez was given a special invitation to compete in Canada’s first Calgary Stampede. Johnny Mullens, who had worked with him on the Ladder, personally invited Bojorquez. A train with horses and cowboys left El Paso for Canada and returned in a grand trip through California. Will Rogers is alleged to have watched Bojorquez rope at the Stampede, praising him in print. However, research has not yet yielded Rogers’ assessment.

In 1892 Bojorquez took a bride, Veronica Analla, and they had two children. Veronica died in 1896 or 1897 and Francisco remarried, this time to Aurora Chavez of Hillsboro. Aurora died in 1899, shortly after the birth of their son. In 1901 Bojorquez married for a third time, to Rosaura Chavez. Their union would last until her death 18 years later and they would have four children, including Clotilde (who became Lonnie Rubio’s mother).

An advertisement in the *Sierra County Advocate* indicates that by 1900, Bojorquez had his own herd of cattle and was ranching on the Palomas while still working for the Ladder Ranch. Old-timer Secundino Apodaca was born after Bojorquez’ death but worked with those who had ridden with Bojorquez. He told of how Bojorquez and several cowboys had gathered wild steers from the Rio Grande bosque and were driving them up the Palomas to the mountain pastures. The steers decided they didn’t want to go and broke loose, stampeding back toward the river. Bojorquez instructed the men to pursue the steers and rope and tie as many as they could. When he rode into their camp later that day, he found that one of the men had suffered a broken leg



Ad in *Sierra County Advocate*, November 30, 1900, with Bojorquez’s own brand and address.

and the rest had managed to rope and tie only a few steers each. They asked Francisco how many he had down and he said that he didn't know. When they followed his backtrail they found 17 steers down and some of them weren't even tied, they were just lying there waiting for him.

Bojorquez's years of public service began in 1906, when he became Sierra County Commissioner. About this time, Bojorquez filed on a homestead on the Rio Grande near present day Caballo Dam and patented the claim in 1911. In 1907 he severed his relationship with Col. Hopewell and the Ladder Ranch. He also farmed the homestead and was known for implementing the most current techniques. Bojorquez was also an active member of the Spanish-American Alliance, a group dedicated to furthering the citizenship and rights of Hispanos.

When Bojorquez was elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives in 1914, he was not allowed to serve by the Republican administration because he had not surrendered his position as County Commissioner before running. A subsequent Special Election was held in 1915 to fill the vacancy, which Bojorquez won overwhelmingly 338-2, but he was still denied the opportunity to serve. Part of the issue was that workers at the Elephant Butte dam site had not been able to vote, having been deemed not to be residents of Sierra County. Despite the fact that the precinct would have had a solid Democratic majority anyway, Republican legislators argued that Bojorquez' election therefore could not be recognized. Hillsboro's well-known attorney Edward Tittman represented the interests of Bojorquez in the matter. Ironically, even the Republican leadership of Sierra County argued that Bojorquez should be seated. H.A. Wolford, former Republican District Attorney, told the Sierra County *Herald* that "I am here, not only in the interest of justice but in the interests of my party's welfare in Sierra county. Should Bojorquez be thrown out of the house in the face of the facts and the evidence, the Republican party would find it difficult to face the people in that country in any future election. It is therefore clear that to unseat Bojorquez ... would be so flagrant an injustice as to be past endurance."<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, as a political advertisement in the *Tucumcari News* soon opined: "When Bojorquez presented himself as a member of the House of Representatives a second time, with his second election certificate, the Republican Bosses laughed at him. 'We are in control here,' they said. 'The people be damned.'"<sup>7</sup> And in consequence of all this, the Republican gangsters had a two-thirds majority in both branches of the State Legislature.

That same year, Bojorquez led a posse of cattlemen to the Zuni Mountains and recovered 48 head of stolen stock. That action, coupled with his blocked election to the New Mexico House, propelled him into the office of Sierra County Sheriff. It was said that, due to the respect he commanded as sheriff, he rarely had to use force or draw his gun. On more than one occasion, all trouble ceased when Bojorquez arrived and began to take off his gloves. Or another example: due to increasingly violent fights between Hispanic and Anglo students at the Caballo School, the teacher asked Sheriff Bojorquez to talk to the students. He rode in while they were at recess, and then taking their seats the students were sobered to see him standing in front of the teacher's desk. Leaning back he reviewed their worried faces and then quietly said, "I want to caution you big white boys about playing so rough with the little native children ...." The classroom filled with laughter.

Still another story: A large Anglo owned ranch in the Monticello area all too frequently picked up cattle and milk cows belonging to the smaller farms and ranches when they gathered. This became annoying and the smaller operators, mostly Hispanic, asked Bojorquez to intercede. The next time it happened he forced the cowboys to hold a cut. One of the Anglo cowboys angrily told Bojorquez that he was just helping the small operators because they were "Mexicans." Bojorquez got off his horse and taking off his gloves invited the cowboy "to see what a Mexican could do." In appreciation the citizens of Monticello presented Bojorquez with an engraved silver-plated pistol and there was no more trouble.

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<sup>6</sup> "State Legislature," *Carlsbad Current-Argus* (January 22, 1915), 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Thou Shalt Not Steal!", *Tucumcari News and Tucumcari Times* (October 5, 1916), 8.



F. M. Bojorquez's grave, Hillsboro Cemetery. Behind his headstone is the rescued marker for his wife Rosaura, and behind that the grave of their daughter Clotilde "Tillie" Rubio. Photo Joe Britton.

Bojorquez's third wife Rosaura died in 1919. He built a *capilla* (chapel) over her grave on their ranch. The capilla, now on Bureau of Reclamation property, was vandalized but her tombstone was recovered and her grandson (Lonnie Rubio, Jr.) placed it in the Hillsboro cemetery, between Bojorquez' grave and that of his daughter Clotilde. Bojorquez remarried yet again in the fall of 1919, to Ophelia Chavez.

When the local citizens heard that neighboring Socorro County had presented its notorious sheriff and hero, Elfego Baca, with a gold badge, they decided that not only should Bojorquez have a similar badge but that the badge "in comparison will make Elfego's look like the light of a tallow dip compared to the dazzling glorious brilliancy of the morning star." On July 4, 1920, the badge was duly presented to their hero: a gold badge studded with diamonds. 170 citizens, cross-cutting ethnic and political lines, had donated \$576.00 for its acquisition.

Just before the badge presentation, Bojorquez was appointed to the New Mexico College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts (now NMSU) Board of Regents in June 1920 by Governor Larrazolo. Then that fall he was nominated by the Labor Party for the position of Secretary of State, but soon fell ill with appendicitis, from which he died on November 20. His obituary read: "After being operated on four times, Sheriff Frank Bojorquez died at about five o'clock last Saturday evening. Deceased came here in the early 80's, and during his lifetime held several offices of public trust. At the time of his death he had about served his second term as Sheriff of Sierra county. Frank Bojorquez, kind, genial and upright, was one of the best known men in southern New Mexico, and his death is a severe lost to the community." Some lines from a *corrido* (ballad) composed at the time of his death, say it all:

Porque alli havia vaqueros  
De lo bueno a lo mejor.  
(Because here we have cowboys  
Of the good, he was the best.)

*For at least 35 years, Karl Laumbach collected stories and photographs of F.M. Bojorquez and his life and times. He pursued an archaeological career in southern New Mexico beginning in 1974. A graduate of New Mexico State University, he spent nine years directing projects for the NMSU contract archaeology program before joining Human Systems Research, Inc. in 1983. Now retired, he serves as an advisor of the GZP.*

\* \* \*

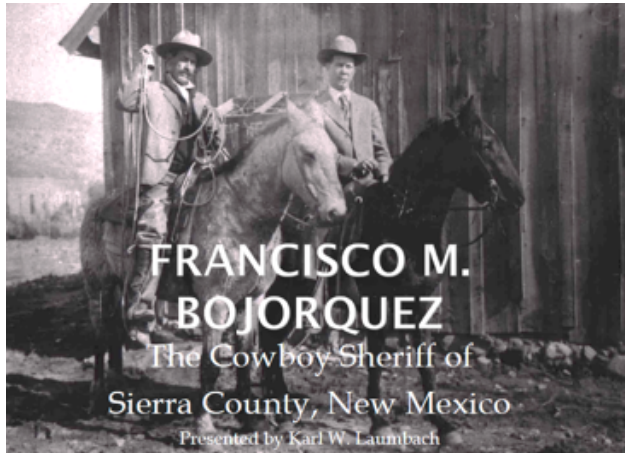
*Alan Bojorquez, Francisco's great-grandson, is an attorney in Austin, Texas, and still stays in touch with Hillsboro as a member of the Historical Society. In an email from January 8, 2023, he wrote of his family:*

As you can imagine, Francisco M. [the sheriff] was a legend in our home, a family hero of mythical proportions. For a kid with this unusual last name, it was truly something seeing my great-grandfather cited as a source of inspiration in Eugene Manlove Rhodes' books.

I'm blessed to have been close to my grandfather, Francisco A. Bojorquez, who idolized his dad [Francisco M.]. I loved my grandpa, a WWI vet, farmer, carpenter, Sierra County Tax Assessor, retired from the VA, storyteller, joyful fiddle player.

Jacob Tafoya Bojorquez, my dad, was my hero. Still is. Graduate of Western New Mexico University, Korean War combat vet, an accountant who served as Auditor or Controller of several public entities, retiring from the El Paso County's Thomason General Hospital. He was the leader of the Horizon City Community Improvement Association, American Legion post, Lion's Club, Volunteer Fire Department, and Boy Scout Troop. Elected to the Horizon Water Authority (now the Regional Municipal Utility District) board of directors. Devoted father of 7, grandfather of 17.

[Both Jacob and Alan's mother, Betty, are now deceased. -Ed]



**INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE  
FASCINATING LIFE AND TIMES OF  
FRANCISCO BOJORQUEZ?**

**Come hear**

**Karl Laumbach**

**in person!**

**Hillsboro Community Center  
Saturday, January 20, 4:00 pm**

***Additions and corrections ...***

In the article on the General Store Cafe in the August issue, I wrote, "One often hears the Sirius XM radio station Willie's Roadhouse playing in the background—a nod toward Ben and Doreen's Canadian roots." Several readers raised a question about what the "nod toward Ben and Doreen's Canadian roots" meant?

Well, the first person to introduce me to Willie Nelson years ago was a Canadian, and all this time I've assumed that he is too. Wrong! As Ben laughingly pointed out to me, "He's from *Fort Worth*—I used to go to his birthday parties!" So perhaps I should have written instead, "in a nod toward Ben's Texan roots ..." —Ed.



Willie Nelson, 2008.  
Photo Minette Layne,  
WikiCommons.

*And in regard to the history of the General Store Cafe building's earlier life as a drugstore, Garland Bills writes with a few more historical notes:*

I'm pretty confident that C. [Charles] C. Miller was the first owner of the drugstore and maybe the one who built the building. Thomas Lannum claimed the property in 1885, sold it to Louis Galles and Galles to C.C. Miller, both in early 1888. Miller advertises C.C. Miller Drugs 1888-1902. George T. Miller took over the business by 1902, and he, his wife, and finally his son ran the business until the son's death in 1973.

Of interest are the other early drugstores in Hillsboro. The first seems to be June (or Jesse) Fuller, son of G. M. Fuller who ran Hillsboro Hydraulic Mining Co and built our museum building. June advertised his drugstore in *The Black Range* newspaper in 1882-3—and in 1886 was convicted of taking money from the mail! Then there was William Standish's City Drugs in 1885-6, but he moved his business to Lake Valley by 1888. There was also a Nowers Pharmacy in 1895 and 1899. And there was Manuel Aragon's Palace Drug in 1899, but by 1900 he moved to Alamogordo and sold some fixtures to G. T. Miller.

Then there's the James Dalglish that the General Store Cafe article says was the original owner. He was for a long time in Chloride and Hermosa. We have him here in Hillsboro in 1899 with a grocery store, but the photo we have of his store is definitely not the cafe building.

## 2023 Annual Report of Gifts

As an all-volunteer, non-profit organization, the Hillsboro Historical Society relies upon annual membership dues and other gifts for most of its income. We would like to thank all those who have contributed over and above annual membership dues this year:

### *Members giving in addition to basic membership*

Greg and Barb Andrews	John and Linda Glova	Tom Scanlan
Gary and Barbara Asteak	Charles and Ann Horak	Stephen C. Siegfried
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Garland Bills      Sonja Franklin      William C. King      David and Marion Salopek

### *Non-Membership Gifts*

James and Joy Schill, in honor of Sam Miller  
Mark Thompson, in honor of his great-grandparents, Nicholas and Harriet Galles

***We would also like to thank each of our members for their annual contribution!***

***In addition to HHS members, Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos is sent to 18 regional libraries, museums, cultural organizations and foundations, as well as the governor and our state legislative and congressional representatives.***

*Gifts received as of November 15, 2023: our sincere apology if any information is incorrect or incomplete. Please let us know if that is the case.*

## **Black Range Museum Bookshelf Notes**

**(Books available in the Museum Giftshop)**

**Lazy B: Growing Up on a Cattle Ranch in the American Southwest.** In this book, Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman United States Supreme Court Justice, and her brother Alan tell of growing up on a ranch straddling the New Mexico-Arizona border. She often said the lessons she learned growing up on the ranch shaped her life, values, and philosophy. It also provides a genuine, honest, and loving glimpse into the day-to-day life of a working cattle ranch and its denizens in the last century in the Southwest.

**Racial Frontiers: Africans, Chinese, and Mexicans in Western America 1848-1890.** Arnolde De Leon presents a well-researched book on the racial minorities, particularly the women, of the American West: their histories, roles, and contributions to the present. The cultural changes these groups brought to the West is significant but so were the often-dramatic changes they made to their own lifeways. The author is an engaging and skilled writer and researcher.

## Día de los Muertos Hillsboro's Second Annual Day of the Dead Celebration November 4, 2023

“The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.” – Cícero



Left to right and top to bottom: A skeleton guards the Community Center door; David Farrell adorns Garland Bills' face; Monica Ortiz Uribe of El Paso paints participants' faces; the procession to the cemetery; musicians David Farrell, Richard Pearlman, and "The Colonel" serenade the dead; paper flowers adorn the cemetery fence; *pan de calaveres*; the potluck supper at the Community Center.

***Special thanks go to program organizers Barbara Pearlman and Linda Velarde,  
and to Kristen Boren and the Community Center for its support!***

## Editor's Note

Over the last several years, the *GZP* has featured the stories of a number of extended families who have shaped the evolution of the community. Though not necessarily by design, this emphasis is not accidental either, for when one digs into the local history of Sierra County, the prominence of these families is unavoidable. They form a kind of stable skeletal frame upon which the peregrinations of so many countless others through the region have been stretched.

In this issue, we focus on the Rubio family, and by extension also on the Bojorquez family which was related to them by marriage. The name Rubio is quite familiar in the area, since one member of the family still lives in Hillsboro (Lonnie), one in Truth or Consequences (Patsy), and a third who also lived in Hillsboro died only recently (Margie). Other members of the family are widely scattered now, but some of the younger generation still have a strong homing instinct and make regular visits.

Bojorquez, on the other hand, is a name less familiar to most current-day residents. Yet members of this family were among the most well-known citizens of late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Sierra County. To remind the community of their history and influence, therefore, is a real editorial privilege.



My special thanks go to Karl Laumbach for sharing his research on the Bojorquez clan, especially of the life story of its patriarch, Francisco M. Bojorquez. Karl's enthusiasm for his subject is palpable, as I hope you will discover, both in his essay and upcoming presentation on January 20 at the Community Center.

--Joe Britton

*Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos (GZP)*  
is the quarterly journal of:

### The Hillsboro Historical Society

P. O. Box 461, Hillsboro, New Mexico 88042

[www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com](http://www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com)

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#### To become a member, please visit:

[www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com/contact/](http://www.hillsborohistoricalsociety.com/contact/)

The mission of the Hillsboro Historical Society is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of Hillsboro, Kingston, and the surrounding area.

HHS is a member of the  
Historical Society of New Mexico.

We are an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.

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#### Journal Editor: Joseph Britton

To offer submissions or comments, please contact:  
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**Collections:** Leah Tookey, Garland  
Bills

Anyone who might want to serve on  
one of the committees, please contact  
any of our board members



**Hillsboro Historical Society**  
Serving the Community since 2008

**2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

The Hillsboro Historical Society is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, collect, and protect the history of the Hillsboro, Kingston, and Lake Valley region. Memberships are on a calendar year basis (January 1 to December 31) and include a subscription to our quarterly journal (sent via email unless requested otherwise). Dues are \$25 annually. All contributions are tax-deductible.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:</b>	\$ 25.00
Additional contribution:	\$ _____
Gift Membership: (Please provide name, address and email for each person.)	\$ _____
Total contribution:	\$ _____

**LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP:** A minimum one-time donation of \$2,000 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail this completed Membership Form along with a check for your Total Contribution made payable to the Hillsboro Historical Society at the address below. **THANK YOU!**

**Hillsboro Historical Society  
P. O. Box 461  
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