

the officers of the law he managed to turn States' Evidence and thereby absolve himself of all blame and perhaps saved himself from the gallows or life imprisonment.

Source of Information: The writer was a clerk in the store at Arroyo Hondo covering the period embraced in this narrative and was intimately acquainted with Ramón Roybal.

A Shepherd at Work in Taos County, New Mexico

by Reyes Nicanor Martínez

It was the first week in May of the year 1896, when the writer, while yet a small boy, was taken by his father to "Las Cuchillas," the country immediately west of Tres Piedras, in Taos County, to help him lamb his sheep.

It was there that I first became familiar with the life that a shepherd leads in this part of the state.

In those days, the public domain was used as free range for grazing sheep. No restrictions, as those now imposed by Forest Service regulations were then in force, although by common agreement among themselves, each owner of a flock of sheep reserved a certain section of the range for lambing. These lambing places came to be known, as time passed, by the name of the owner of the sheep that were first lambed there, and those names serve to designate the places to the present day.

Las Cuchillas is a low range of mountains, or what might be termed an extension of the foothills of the Chama range. This extension spreads out eastward, like a wide fringe, in the direction of the Río Grande river. Narrow valleys cut the surface and afford good grazing at lambing time; and the wooded section affords protection to the new-born lambs from the cold and sleet that sometimes comes unexpectedly over that section at that season of the year.

Eastward of Las Cuchillas, as far as the Río Grande river, spreads an extensive plain, dotted here and there by "cerros," as those high, wooded, individual hills are called. This is the dry section of Taos County, as no rivers course through it, and it is almost uninhabited.

That part which lies east of the Río Grande river is the irrigated and inhabited section, where lie all its villages (except Ojo Caliente) and its rivers. This is the farming section of the county, and there is very little land between the villages and the farms that can be used for grazing

livestock, except that part of the Sangre de Cristo range which borders the county on the east, where many sheep are grazed in summer.

The extreme southern part of the county consists of more rugged mountainous country, and includes two or three land grants, which also afford summer grazing for a large number of sheep.

In this section of the country the shepherd of Taos County plies his vocation, and a vocation it is, because a great part of the adult male population of Taos County chose or adopted, since many years past, sheep-herding as their calling or main occupation, in which kind of work they became very proficient, so much so that even to this day preference is shown by the big sheep-raisers of the states of Colorado and Wyoming for men from Taos County to tend their sheep. (In this connection, a story is told of a man who came to love the work so much, that he spent several years in succession tending sheep, without ever visiting a human settlement in all that length of time. His whole interest and attention so centered in his job that it became part of his very existence; and it is said that when he returned to his native village, his gait was indicative of the mode of walking of a sheep, straight forward, head lowered, and looking only at the ground and some people used to say that when walking alone, he would even bleat, in an undertone, like a sheep.)

The life of the shepherd is very solitary and monotonous. The same routine is the order, day after day. He gets up at dawn in order to prepare and eat his breakfast before the flock begins to stir in the "mojada" (the sleeping-ground). No late staying in bed is permissible, as the sheep, once they begin to stir, soon "string out" (the habitual way of sheep to follow one another in "strings" or rows) of the sleeping-ground and spread out to graze, and, if not followed immediately by the herder, many of them stray away in bunches from the main flock, and a "corta" (a bunch of sheep that cut away from the main flock and wander away, sometimes for days without being found) is the result. After eating his breakfast, he makes a bundle of some lunch for his noonday meal, and throws his rifle over his shoulder and, with the aid of his dog, he drives the sheep out of the sleeping-ground to graze for the day.

Having nothing to do but watch that the sheep do not scatter too far apart, or that some hungry coyote does not strike the flock, he sits at

some convenient spot, his dog beside him, changing once in a while to other points to suit his fancy, and mediates all day long. Occasionally he sends out his dog to gather the sheep when they have spread out too far. At dusk he returns to camp, driving the flock to the sleeping-ground. Then he prepares and eats his evening meal, not forgetting to throw a piece of meat to his dog, and retires for the night.

A cook-stove is a luxury that the shepherd does not enjoy, except at lambing and sharing time, when the greatly increased number of men employed on those occasions requires the cooking of food in much larger quantities. Winter or summer, the herder cooks his meals on an open fire in front of his tent.

A shepherd's bed usually consists of two or three sheep-pelts and from one to three blankets (depending on the season of the year), housed in a one-pole tent. In the tent he also keeps his supplies of food, matches and other necessities.

A flock of sheep usually numbers, at the most, fifteen hundred head, and includes several goats; the larger the number of sheep, usually the more goats in the flock. These goats are very useful in leading the sheep across rivers, into corrals and other places where the sheep by themselves would be loath to go.

Sometimes two men send a flock. In this instance, one of the men is the "mayordomo" and the other one, the herder. The duty of the mayordomo is to prepare the meals for both, to seek fresh grazing-grounds, to move camp, to care for the pack-burros, and to watch the flock at night. To avoid disturbance by hungry coyotes and, on some occasions, by lions or bears, he places lighted lanterns at suitable places about the sleeping-ground, although this precaution does not always assure freedom from attack. The barking of the ever-watchful dog many a time arouses the mayordomo from his sleep, and he has to get up and, rifle in hand, go after the predatory nocturnal visitors. Many instances are related in which a lion or bear has driven off part of a flock from its sleeping-grounds in the night and slaughtered most of the sheep, eating only part of the carcasses and leaving the remainder strewn all over the ground. It is said that these predatory beasts have a habit of killing as many sheep as they can, before starting to eat the flesh.

A curious and interesting part of a mayordomo's job is that of loading camp on the burros, preparatory to moving it to another location. These beasts of burden quickly learn to obey the command of the mayordomo; and when he has to load the tent and the rest of the camp-outfit on them, he taps them gently on the shins with a stick, saying, at the same time, "incate, incate" (kneel, kneel). The burro kneels down on its front legs and then the man puts the load on its back with little difficulty.

The shepherd gains much experience in telling changes in the weather. He watches the heavens and the behavior of wild animals for signs which, although not always accurate, in the great majority of cases indicate that his judgment has been right. Thus it is that when a new moon first appears in the evening above the western horizon, if it is "colgada" (hanging), that is, if its points appear in a line perpendicular, or nearly so, to the earth's surface, it is going to let all the water run out, and the succeeding four weeks will be a rainy period; but if its ends appear in a line horizontal or parallel, (or nearly so) to earth's surface, like an upturned saucer, it is going to hold all the water, and the ensuing period, throughout all its phases, is going to be dry. An "ojo de buey" (ox's eye), a patch in the sky resembling a small segment of a rainbow, indicates an unusually rainy period. In winter, when the coyotes howl vehemently at night, a storm is brewing.

All these signs make the shepherd cautious, and he prepares to meet all these expected changes in the weather by taking his raincoat along in summer, or his overcoat and sheep-lined mittens and plenty of matches in winter.

Before forest reserves were established, herders used to burn the old, dead grass every spring, in April, and the new grass would then make quicker growth for lambing time.

Lambing the flock is the most laborious part of a shepherd's job. At this time, the owner of the sheep employs four or five more men than during the rest of the year, with the exception of shearing time. The work requires good knowledge of the job, and experienced hands are very necessary at this time.

First, "el primal" (the cousins), the yearlings, are separated from "el prenatal," the ewes that are to bear lambs, into a separate flock, and

a camp is set for them at a distance away from the lambing grounds. The ewes that are to bear lambs are then divided into two or three flocks, each of a size more convenient to handle. As the lambs begin to arrive, all those born on the same day, together with their mothers, are held apart for two or three days, a lighted lantern being placed at their sleeping ground every night; then these small flocks that have come in sequence during each week are joined into a larger flock, till at the end of the lambing period, usually three weeks, all the lambs born and their mothers are joined into one large flock till shearing time. After shearing, the flock is divided into two smaller flocks till the fall of the year, when the lambs are sold and delivered to the buyer, or shipped to market.

Many a time, during lambing time, the herder has to play the role of midwife and assist some mother-ewe to give birth to its lamb, as otherwise many a ewe dies in the act.

Some ewes sometimes give birth to their lambs and go away and leave them, forsake them without even giving them their first feeding. When this happens, the herder catches the ewe and marks it and holds it while the lamb sucks its first meal. He places a similar mark on the lamb. In the evening, when he drives the flock to its sleeping-ground, he carries the lamb with him and there shuts it up with the mother in a small, narrow pen, the size of which does not allow the ewe to turn about. In this manner, the lamb is able to suck and feed itself. Usually, the ewe "takes" her lamb again within two or three days. But when the ewe is obstinate in taking her lamb, the herder has to take the trouble, every day, to hold the ewe so as to give the lamb a chance to suck the milk and feed itself, till it is able to rustle for itself. Some lambs that are born on very cold days get so benumbed by the cold that they are unable to suck. These lambs are taken by the herder and warmed by the fireside and then left with the mother to feed themselves. Some of these lose their instinct to suck and become helpless cases and soon die of hunger.

"Pencos" (lambs whose mothers die) are common at this time, as are also ewes whose lambs die. When a new-born lamb dies, the herder takes off its pelt as soon thereafter as possible, and saves it. If a ewe dies within a day or two thereafter, leaving her lamb a penco, the herder puts the pelt which he saved from the dead lamb, over the penco, making

it fast by tying it with strings about the neck and the mid section. (It is a well known fact that ewes recognize their offspring by its scent, as well as by its bleat). The herder then places the mother of the lamb that died, together with the penco that wears her lamb's pelt, in a pen. If not immediately, at the most by the next day, the ewe adopts as its own the motherless lamb.

After lambing comes the shearing of the sheep. The herder has no special task at this time, other than to help in driving the sheep that are to be sheared into the corrals and the pens. Here his dog is of great help, as the sheep are very loath to enter the corrals at this time, even though led by the goats, which at other times readily follow. The dog running here and there, barking and biting gently at the legs of some of the sheep, scares them and causes them to push forward into the corral.

After the sheep are sheared, they are driven to the higher altitudes, either to the Chama range or to the Sangre de Cristo range, there to remain till the latter part of September or the first week in October, when the lambs are sold and delivered, or shipped to market.

Life in summer is much more cheerful for the sheepherder than during the cold months of the year. High up on the mountain ranges he passes, rather loafs, most of his time in the shade beneath the aspens or the evergreens. He bathes and fishes in the mountain streams, and eats of the ripe berries that abound there in summer. But there he has to contend with another problem. Bears are numerous in the mountains, and the herder has to be ever watchful in order to stave off their attacks, either upon himself or his flock. His dog serves him very usefully there, as the sheep sometimes spread through the forests, over ground which the herder finds it difficult to overtake them. The dog does the job for him and drives them down to where the herder wants them to be.

In winter, the same daily monotony is his daily lot. He packs himself in two to three pairs of trousers and about the same number of shirts, besides his overcoat and sheep-lined mittens, in order to keep warm. The days are short and the sheep do not move out of the sleeping-ground till a late hour in the morning. The sagebrush of the plains between the Sangre de Cristo range and Las Cuchillas, where the sheep are wintered, provides ample feed for the flock, excepting the old ewes, which have to

be cared for at the home-ranch. On these plains, a well-trained dog does most of the work.

A sheepherder's dog learns to obey its master if it is trained while it is young, and obeys his every command explicitly. And the help afforded by these dogs has made sheep-herding an especially appealing job to many persons who, even today, spend the major part of their lives tending sheep, living only two or three months of each year with their families.

When the sheep spread out too far, the herder sends his dog to gather them. The dog goes out and stops at intervals to watch for signs which the herder makes with his arms, indicating to the dog in which direction to round up the sheep, or whether to drive them toward him, and when to stop and come back to him. This saves many a step to the meditating herder.

In years gone by, the sheepherder led quite a shabby existence. He used to go without changing his garments, without shaving and cutting his hair, for long intervals of time, till he visited the village. And his visits to the village used to cause much merriment, as he walked through the village in his uncouth appearance, driving his burros ahead of him.

The life of the sheepherder has changed but little since those early days, with the exception that he now is afforded some conveniences which he did not enjoy in those days. He leads a cleaner existence now and, all in all, the job has now a stronger appeal to the man who likes that kind of existence than ever before.

There is a poem, written in Spanish, entitled "Así Es Como Va Pasando El Pobre Pastor La Vida" (This is the way the poor sheepherder spends his life), which very aptly describes the sheepherder's job and existence in the early days. This poem was written by Escolástico Martínez, a native of Taos County, who, although uneducated, had great ability for composing poetry.

All in all, a sheepherder's life is one of peace and contentment. The hurry and annoyance of modern life are far away from him.

Cooperation

by Reyes Martínez

The year 1900 seems to have been an imaginary dividing line between the old and the new in Taos County. Many of the old customs seem to have gone with the turn of the century. The modern supplanted the ancient with a suddenness, almost imperceptible at that time, but now clearly perceived by those casting a retrospective glance to that date—1900 A. D.

The modern inventions that have revolutionized modes of travel, farming, etc., have also effected changes in the relationship of people towards one another. In no other respect has this change been more marked than in the lack of neighborly cooperation among the present-day inhabitants of the very same villages, where the people of that former era worked together at their daily tasks. Now money is the primary consideration in all matters where the employment of labor is concerned. In those times, neighbor helped neighbor, without a money consideration between them. This spirit of cooperation developed from the times of the first settlers, when it became essential, almost imperative, for the preservation of their very existence against the hostile tribes of Indians that inhabited the region. This cooperation custom was strikingly demonstrated during the harvest season, when as many as twenty men gathered, each with his sickle, at the field of a neighbor, to help him reap his wheat, oats, or other similar grain. Each man took a "melgo" (a narrow strip of land on the field, designated by a shallow ditch on each side to afford easier irrigation and conservation of the soil) the full length of the field. There were some very fast reapers. These soon cut deep swaths into the field and finished their strips far ahead of the others, then turned back and uttered a loud shout of triumph and returned to the other end of the field for a rest and a leisurely smoke of a cigarette, rolled from native-raised tobacco (Mexican "punche") in long corn husks commonly used at the time for cigarette paper, while the others finished their strips.

At the house, the preparation of the meals required the help of several women (wives of some of the men in the field), and the noon hour found a tempting menu spread before the hungry workmen.

The reaping at this particular field was finished in short order; then the men went to the field of the next man whose field was ready to be reaped, then on to the other succeeding fields, till all their grain was stacked, ready to be threshed. At threshing time the grain was hauled in sacks, on the backs of the men, sometimes a mile or more from the fields to their bins at home.

Other work in which they cooperated was the cleaning, carding (combing) and spinning of wool, the plastering of their houses, the washing, at the river, of their blankets and mattresses (twice a year—in the spring and in the fall), when the spread of colored blankets formed a curious display on the fences of the village. These jobs were done by the women. The making of syrup from cornstalks was also a cooperation job, done by the men and the women, working together. This was always an interesting event, to both adults and children.

During the latter part of August or the first part of September, the cornstalks were cut and gathered in from the fields by the men. The stalk was cut just above the highest ear of corn (a plant produced, usually, one or two ears, and many plants produced no ears), so as to allow the grain to mature fully; later, on the remaining part of the plant. The stalks gathered were then stripped of all leaves, washed and placed in a deep trough made from a large, hollowed-out pine-log, where they were pounded with long-handled wooden mallets, to a pulp. For the purpose of pressing the juice out of the pulp, an apparatus called "La viga-prensa," was used. This consisted of a round receptacle, about three or four feet high, made from a section of the log from which the trough was made, open at the top, with a hole at the side adjacent to the bottom, and a long pole, to which was attached a solid, round block of wood that fitted into the receptacle with a leeway of one-half inch all around. The receptacle was fixed upon a platform.

The pole was attached at one end, from some strong, fixed object, six feet or so, opposite the wooden receptacle, in a way that permitted it to be raised so as to allow the solid cylinder of wood to be inserted into the

receptacle. A quantity of the pulp was placed into the receptacle, to within a few inches from the top, the solid block of wood lowered upon it, then the apparatus was ready for pressing out the juice. Here the youngsters of the village had their fun. A string of boys and young men would climb on the long horizontal pole, holding with their hands from a rope stretched lengthwise above them, between two upright poles, and would swing up and down with it, in this manner pressing out the juice from the pulp, the juice running out through the hole near the bottom of the receptacle into pans, basins and other utensils. Once in a while one of them in the noisy merriment would let go of the rope, or was pushed off the pole, and would fall to the ground. The women poured the juice from the utensils into copper kettles to boil to the desired sweetness and consistency. During the boiling process the scum was gathered and taken off as it arose to the surface. The boiling juice required close watching to prevent boiling over. The pressing out and boiling of the juice was done at night in the open, starting at dusk and continuing throughout most of the night. The flare of two or three wood fires furnished the necessary light.

As soon as the first batch of syrup was made, and at intervals thereafter, the young men were treated to a spread of it on slices of bread, as an incentive to swing on the viga-prenso throughout the night, when necessary. One night and sometimes two or three nights were required to put out the product of one owner; then the rest of those who had any cornstalks for syrup would take their turn.

Gone forever are those days of mutual cooperation, and the trend of modern times now requires every man to hustle for himself, or pay for all the labor that he employs.

Source of Information: Personal knowledge of writer.

Social Life

by Reyes N. Martínez

At the beginning, social intercourse was limited to visits among the neighbors. Later, as conditions became more settled, games and dances were engaged in. Their games were of the simplest form. Most frequently engaged in was "Pelota," or hockey; sides being chosen, the opposing groups of players spread out in rows facing each other, "chuecos," hockey-clubs, in hand, ready for the contest. The captains of each team "fought" the ball as it was tossed into the air by the umpire, or referee, and the game got into full swing. And it really was "swing," the ball speeding along the ground at each blow from the chuecos, sometimes forward, at other times backward, the fastest runners having the advantage. Spectators lined the way in the open fields where the game was being played. Exciting moments were when the ball "grounded" on a stretch of soft ground and both groups closed in. The high swinging and clicking of the chuecos indicated to the observers that a heated contest was in progress. Sometimes out of the scuffle a real fight resulted, as someone of the players was accidentally struck by a club which drew blood. It was a serious matter then. Some of the onlookers would join the melee, and the final result was the ending of the game after most of the players had been disabled by severe beating with the clubs, some lying unconscious on the ground, the remaining few reaching a truce and disbanding. Most of them had gone into the game sporting white dress shirts and wearing colored silk handkerchiefs around their necks. Their coming back was an even more "colored" affair, their white shirts blotched with blood and some of the handkerchiefs tied around their heads covering wounds, mementoes of an overheated contest. However, games did not always end in this gory manner, and when a more sporting spirit prevailed and the game was played to conclusion, it was a very enjoyable pastime for players and spectators alike. Played "hasta metesol," till sunset, the deciding factor was the location of the ball with respect to the starting point, the ball lying