

*The
Kerr County Historical Commission
presents*

An ORAL HISTORY

Of

LOUIS ROMERO JR.

Kerrville, Texas 2016

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: LOUIS ROMERO JR.
Interviewers: Francelle Robison Collins
Bonnie Pipes Flory
Date: November 22, 2016
Place: Kerr County Courthouse
Kerrville, Texas

*The Oral History Project is a project of
The Kerr County Historical Commission,
a volunteer organization. Oral History
Committee chair is Francelle Robison Collins.*

Transcribed and Edited by Kelli K. Collins

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Name: LOUIS ROMERO JR.

Date of Birth: September 3, 1930

Place of Birth: San Antonio, Texas

Education: Tivy High School, Kerrville
Schreiner Institute
North Texas State University
(University of North Texas)

Father: Louis Dionicio Romero
Mother: Maria Torres Romero

Children: Toni and Gina Romero,
Pam Dooley & Mary Martha McNelis (stepdaughters)

Spouse(s): Bobbie Romero (Divorced)
Josephine (Joppy) Romero (Deceased)
Rosemary Meek Romero

SUMMARY

Louis Romero Jr. was born in San Antonio, Texas and moved to Kerrville with his parents shortly afterwards and has lived there ever since. Louis' grandfather passed away and his grandmother had two young daughters and needed a way to make a living now that she was a widow with two young children. She started cooking and selling Mexican food out of her house. During WWII, her business was growing and she canned and sent tamales to soldiers all over the world. She opened the Tamale Factory in Kerrville in 1929 and Louis continued operating the business until he closed it in 2004. It started in 1929 selling only tamales and tortillas and to go orders. The tortillas were a nickel and the Mexican Dinner was 50 cents. It was in continuous operation for 75 years.

An Oral History of
LOUIS ROMERO JR.

My name is Francelle Robison Collins and I am with the Kerr County Historical Commission, Oral History Project. Today is November 22, 2016, and I am here at the Kerr County Courthouse in Kerrville, Texas, with Bonnie Pipes Floury. We are talking with LOUIS Romero, who understands that we are making audio and video recordings of this interview and that a typewritten transcript of this interview will be provided so that changes can be made. The audio and video tapes, however, cannot be edited. This information along with copies of any family pictures and documents provided by you will then be turned over to the Kerr Regional History Center, Schreiner University, and the University of North Texas' Portals to Texas History, where they will be available to the public unless specific restrictions are placed on them by you. These restrictions will be noted in the Release form after you have had a chance to review your manuscript. Are you clear on what we are doing today?

FRANCELLE: Can you give us your given name, please?

LOUIS: Louis Romero Jr.

FRANCELLE: When and where were you born?

LOUIS: I was born in San Antonio, Texas on September 3, 1930.

FRANCELLE: Where you born at home or in a hospital?

LOUIS: Neither one, I was actually born in a boarding house, in San Antonio. My parents were residents of the boarding house. The boarding house was centrally located to the central district of San Antonio. When you say boarding house, this was rather unique, I think my parents were the only married couple there, the rest of them were single people that were employed in downtown San Antonio. Some were employed in office buildings and the other ones were employed in the medical center or hospitals there. So that's the story, as I remember the structure was two stories and it was owned by two sisters and much later I remember this my grandmother took me there when I was around 11 years old and that's more or less how I remember this.

FRANCELLE: Was there a doctor or a midwife that delivered you?

LOUIS: It was a physician and his offices were in the Nix Building. His name was Lucius B. Hill, which is strange because the Nix Hospital was quite a distance from the boarding house.

FRANCELLE: Did your parents live there at that time or did they just go San Antonio?

LOUIS: My dad was employed in downtown San Antonio, and he'd have to take public transportation or a cab to work. He was a jeweler, and he worked at a jewelry store downtown. Shortly after I was born, which was during the time of the Depression, he was dismissed from his work and couldn't find employment in San Antonio at that time, so my parents came back here to Kerrville, where mom was from.

FRANCELLE: Do you have any children?

LOUIS: I have two daughters and they are here right now. Toni, the oldest and Gina is the youngest one. I hate to use the term here, but I have two stepdaughters, Pam and Mary Martha Meek who reside in San Antonio.

FRANCELLE: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

LOUIS: No, I am an only child.

FRANCELLE: What was your father's name?

LOUIS: His name was Louis Dionicio Romero. He was born in Mexico City in 1900. He came to the United States around the 1920's. Mexico was still involved in a Revolution and he and some other friends came to the United States. Dad later on, became a citizen of the U.S. and that is how we wound up back in Kerrville, which was moms home town.

FRANCELLE: What was your mother's name?

LOUIS: Maria Torres was her maiden name and she was from Kerrville and my dad was from Mexico City.

FRANCELLE: How did they meet?

LOUIS: The way that I understand it, there was a railroad that came here and stopped here in Kerrville and there was a turnaround and it went back to San Antonio. Dad came here with some friends for a weekend. The train would come for an excursion trip to Kerrville and go back to San Antonio later on that evening. So, as the story goes, dad came here with friends and picnic baskets and went to the Guadalupe River and mom was there with some girlfriends and they met and the rest is history.

FRANCELLE: That's a neat story. Did you know your grandparents?

LOUIS: Yes, on my mother's side it was Delphina Torres and Ambrosio Torres and on my dad's side I knew his parents also.

FRANCELLE: Where were your grandparents born?

LOUIS: On my dad's side they were born in Mexico City. Dad had three brothers and one sister. On my mom's side, my grandfather was born in Junction but lived here in Kerrville. My grandmother was born here and stayed here after she married my grandfather.

FRANCELLE: We all know about Torres' restaurant, was that your grandmother that started that?

LOUIS: Yes it was.

FRANCELLE: Was that something that she always wanted to do?

LOUIS: No, events happened that my grandfather, her husband, worked for Peterson Garage and he was a mechanic and he met with ill fate on the 29th, and so my grandmother was left as a young widow and the job of raising two young daughters. The eldest was Carmen and the youngest was Maria, my mother. After that happened she had to make some means of an income. So, grandmother, as I understand it, was helping out cooking in other people's homes and that type of thing and someone suggested to her that she was such a great cook, maybe she should try making Mexican food and serving it at her house. She thought about it and they said she could turn her dining room and only prepare food in there for advanced reservations. So that is how it all started, from there it all mushroomed into a building. She had a great kitchen, really a commercial kitchen for that time. I remember that growing up, people would come in from the side of the house and order food. She serviced most of the restaurants with basics, tortillas, tamales, and things like that. Not only that but she supplied the school system, restaurants in town, Schreiner University and the summer camps.

FRANCELLE: The schools had an order they would put in?

LOUIS: It was a standard order. They prepared Mexican food on a certain day and that depended on whether the school was able to get cheese from some sort of government funding.

FRANCELLE: Did she have any help?

LOUIS: Originally the help that she had was some ladies that helped her in the very primitive preparation of things. There were no blenders or anything like that in those days. She did it with a metate, where she would take the chiles and hard boil them and take the skin off and all of that basic rue was done that way. Refrigeration, a lot of times, here in the city, we had an ice plant and blocks of ice would be distributed to grandmother and it would be brought in and there were coolers and what not and that's how it started out.

FRANCELLE: Everything was fresh every day?

LOUIS: Yes, every day. She didn't serve any meals there and orders were put in by restaurants and what not and it wasn't a situation where people would come and go. Much later it was, that's how it started in her home and then around 1942 or '43 is when most people remember the Tortilla Factory. It was in a building that was built during the war years and around the time of rationing. It started out as one building but it was truly a tortilla factory, the tortilla machine was imported from Mexico, the corn was government inspected. The corn was then cooked and then you would go through the process of grinding it.

FRANCELLE: So it was ground there?

LOUIS: On the spot. The grinder was unique and it really, truly deserved to be in a museum. Grandmother went to back to Mexico and came back with two of the stone grinding wheels, that were scored and whatnot and with the help of a creative carpenter and a blacksmith, she actually designed a corn grinder. The frame for it was 6 x 6 timbers with a hopper, which is where you would place the corn. The blacksmith made the shaft with a wheel and the auger at the end, where you would put the corn in that bin, and when you turn that wheel with the auger it would bring the corn from the hopper into the stone wheels and then you caught the fresh masa. The unique thing about it was that the engine that drove it was a modified Model T engine. My grandmother would get up about 4 o'clock in the morning and my uncle would help her to get the engine going, a spark and a crank and all that kind of stuff. It was a jewel, and he would crank it up and get the engine started and you better put the corn in the hopper because once it was engaged it would just suck that corn right through there and the finished product was gorgeous. It was a wonderful texture. Much later on, a gentleman from San Antonio came in and bought that grinder. I wish I had it.

FRANCELLE: Did she use that all the way through or did she update it?

LOUIS: That was doing Puritan time, when she operated out of our home. She operated out of the home, but she had a Stone Mason make a grill, which was all bricks around the side and on the top it had a plate of iron/steel that was about 1/2 an inch thick, fire with wood in there to heat the grill. At first, that was where she did all of her cooking, rather than a stove. They then had a different grinder that was made by a company out of San Antonio. So, at that time, it was still the same old way of buying corn, cooking it, processing it, it was a 24 hour process, letting it cool and much more than I want to get into.

FRANCELLE: What about the corn husks?

LOUIS: The husks were bought separately, if you cooked. A lot of times, she and the two daughters and the son-in-law, would go with the farmer and buy how many rolls, and they would rip the corn skin off and take that and with a stump and a machete, it's a process of hitting that shuck and separating it from the ear of corn and collecting it. Then you would have to clean them and all of that.

FRANCELLE: Would they have to dry before you could use them?

LOUIS: They were already dry at that time. She didn't have the luxury, as we did much later of buying corn shucks. The ones I bought much later were already cleaned, sized and all of that, so we were able to eliminate a lot of labor. At that time, it was a rough period of time, it was during the 1930's and going into the 1940's.

FRANCELLE: I think you told us that as a young boy you would go with your aunt and go out to Mr. Weston's?

LOUIS: Yes. Mr. Weston was one of the sources for grandmother's corn shucks, because he did some farming at his house and grandmother would go out. My aunt would prepare divinity candy for Mr. Weston, which he loved, and so it was sort of enticing for him. So you were then given permission to go out into the field and harvest that corn and get the corn shucks and there were also other places where they were able to get corn shucks.

FRANCELLE: Was the first restaurant there at Tore's, the Tamale Factory?

LOUIS: Originally it was all take out. It was strictly just tamales and tortillas. They were still supplying the restaurants in town, the VA Hospital, the schools, the camps when they had their summer programs. So we basically just had two or three items. Later on, an addition to that building was made and that's the addition that turned into a restaurant, of sorts. They operated it in the fall and winter and it was at that time that we thought that people didn't eat Mexican food in the summer, so the restaurant part was closed during the summer. The take out part was still available and they left one table there and enchiladas, tacos and things like were made, but we didn't have a full menu.

FRANCELLE: Did she develop her own chili?

LOUIS: My grandmother had spent a lot of time during her youth in San Antonio and during that time she met a lot of people, who later on went into providing commercially, certain products, Gephardt's Chili Powder was one of them. The process for grandmother was like this, she bought the dried chiles from certain areas in Mexico, and they were bought in bulk, and then you brought them to the factory and it would be skimmed and the seeds were taken out of it and then they were roasted, so you would get the pure essence of the chili. I am saying they are from Mexico because that same chiles grown in New Mexico or Arizona has a totally different taste and are identical chiles. I guess it's the land and things like that change the taste of the chiles, so all of her chiles and spices she bought in San Antonio, in bulk and brought them back and roasted them and prepared her own chili powder. She had a special small grinder and she ground up to her specifications. She didn't have recipes like we do today, she made it to her taste.

She would taste it as she was making it. Grandmother always had this uncanny ability, I always thought that she could put the tip of a pin in anything and taste it and if it had 20 ingredients or whatever, she could duplicate it.

FRANCELLE: So, the chiles were roasted and then ground up?

LOUIS: Yes and then all of the ingredients she would buy which were needed for a sauce or whatever she was cooking, she blended them all herself and then she stored them in gallon jars and she used them for her cooking. There was a lot of labor intensive things that she did. You just don't find that now.

FRANCELLE: When did she start sending them to the soldiers?

LOUIS: It was much later. We are getting down to WWII, she was really engaged into raising funds, at that time we didn't have as many nonprofits, the main one was the Red Cross. So, she provided Fiestas every year and would bring in entertainers from San Antonio, professional entertainers, and she and my aunt had taught a lot of the local children how to do the typical Mexican dances. She was quite adaptive at putting on functions like that. During that time, people were telling her how great it would be if their son could have some of her tamales, but they were serving in Germany or overseas somewhere. So that gave her the idea that what she should do, would be to make tamales and can them and send them to every soldier, every soldier that was in the Armed Forces during World War II.

FRANCELLE: Not just local?

LOUIS: I am talking about anybody who had been drafted, who was overseas, during the war years, fighting in Germany or wherever it was. All of the information was gathered and they were shipped to every person in the Armed Forces during WWII, at that specific time, only once did they do that. It was an incredible feat.

FRANCELLE: How did she learn to can?

LOUIS: She received a lot of help from a dietician in the public schools and with her help all of it was done at the high school cafeteria. I'm not sure how they did it but it was put into a sealed can. The interesting thing about it is, a lot of the information has been thrown away, but I think my daughter has a newspaper clipping or something that refers to that and how people wrote my grandmother to thank her. They wrote her personal notes or letters to thank her. It was very sweet. A lot of that information much later in there was destroyed by members of the family, photographs and things of that nature. They thought nobody would be interested in that.

FRANCELLE: So, she did all of the canning and then took it to the Red Cross?

LOUIS: She prepared all of that on site, and it was canned there at the high school.

FRANCELLE: Then she took it to the Red Cross?

LOUIS: No, I don't know who sent it, but she was pretty well connected to the Red Cross, at that time. She put on shows at the VA, because a lot of Veterans were coming back and later on a lot of Veterans had TB. There focus at the VA has changed as time goes by. She was an incredible lady. She raised money every year; she would put on "A Night in Little Mexico," in conjunction with the Lions Club here in Kerrville. The Lions sold tickets and she prepared all of the food and so they had a Fiesta there. All of the proceeds were given to the Lions Club, and then all of that proceeds were given to whatever effort it was. For example, the Lions Camp for the Blind, prior to that it went into some service, whether it was the American Red Cross or what not, to use for their own use during WWII.

FRANCELLE: Wow. That is something else that she could do all of that.

LOUIS: She was an incredible lady.

FRANCELLE: And that was a lot of money out of her pocket.

LOUIS: Yes it was but she also had help from the rest of the family and they would also help with preparing all of the food.

FRANCELLE: There were some famous people that were in the service from this area, did she have any connections with any of them?

LOUIS: Through the years, after the war was over, I believed she supplied some food in there, she had a personal relationship with Admiral Nimitz. I remember the Admiral visiting her at our house.

FRANCELLE: Well, he was going to school here.

LOUIS: There were other notables who would visit her, but I have forgotten who they were. They would visit her in her home.

FRANCELLE: At what point did you start working with her in the business.

LOUIS: Frankly, I didn't start until after I came back from my service years in Japan and that was in 1954. I was in Japan from 1952 until 1954. When I came back, I came into the business and I started out in the back behind the steam table, learning how to grind and all that kind of stuff. I started off from scratch and my grandmother was a very good and very stern teacher. It had to be to her specifications or you had to do it again. So I started in 1954. I was married at that time and from 1954 until 1960 I was at the Tortilla Factory.

FRANCELLE: Did she buy that land or was that in the family?

LOUIS: That was in the family. It took a lot of turns. Almost at the end of WWII, my grandmother had worked herself to death, maybe I shouldn't say death but her health declined so much that she couldn't continue. So, at that time my aunt, Carmen Torres Cortez came in, and her husband, Roman F. Cortez had been working at Kelly Air Force Base, and they came in and basically took over the business while my grandmother recuperated. Carmen and Roman, in addition to running the Tortilla Factory, looked after my wife and baby daughter while I was overseas. Grandmother would still go to the Tortilla Factory and sort of supervise things but then she had to go home. When I came into the picture in 1954, members of my family that were involved in with, my aunt, uncle and grandmother, were there and learned the basics and always retained ownership of it, and eventually I gained ownership of it. It remained in the family until I sold it. I sold the land to HEB in 2004, but kept ownership of the business, but it stayed in continuous operation. Prior to that, I had a restaurant out on Junction Highway, while I was in the service; my parents bought that land out there. At that time the property was on the edge of time and the only thing that was in the area at that time was a motel. I believe the name was the Sands Motel, and a bowling alley was then erected, so there was nothing between 5 Points and the bowling alley, which was built in 1958. I came along and built this restaurant and I had had it designed by an architect to my specifications in 1960, it was a modern building with a modern kitchen, my wife, Bobbie Ann and I saved our money very diligently. After we opened up, we had Spanish Colonial patio in the back, very, very authentic. I operated that for 10 years and during that time I leased it, because of total burn out. At that time in there, without getting to personal, my wife and I divorced and she had also been instrumental in working for me. Reflecting back, Bobbie was the anchor of Torres' Restaurant. The role she played was essential to the success of our business. We not only served Mexican food, we Lions Club met with us, and 80% of the parties we had were served something other than Mexican Food. We held wedding receptions, graduation parties, it was real interesting. The tone was totally different in Kerrville in the 1950's and I sold the business but I kept the Tortilla Factory and went back to work there. During that time the Tortilla Factory still only had food to go, we only made tortillas and tamales there. It served all the camps, the hospital and all the restaurants in town and we had over the counter sales. I remember the tortillas we 5 cents. The typical Mexican dinner was one enchilada, tamale, Spanish rice, refried beans and corn tortillas and that was 50 cents and Mexican candy.

FRANCELLE: Where did you start school?

LOUIS: I started school in 1936 at Notre Dame Institute; it was a Roman Catholic school and it was started by the Reverend Dr. Kemper. The teachers were all nuns were Sisters of Charity; I believe was the name of the order from the Incarnate Word. Father Kemper had provisions in there for those nuns to come into Kerrville and be the teachers for the school. Prior to me attending there, it had been more or less a

boarding school. The students came in from ranches, if they got to late or what not and couldn't get back to the ranch; they were boarded in the Convent by the Sisters. Their parents would come by and pick them up. I went there for grades 1 – 8 and then transferred to Tivy High School.

FRANCELLE: I bet you can't say enough about Father Kemper.

LOUIS: No you can't, it's extensive. The man was incredible, all of the campus of Notre Dame, some funds were from benefactors here, the rest was his money or his father's money. His father was the Chairman of the Board of Trade in Chicago. Father Kemper had received his degrees from Notre Dame University, he got a bachelor's degree, a master's degree and a PHD. He taught languages at the Berlitz School of Languages in Chicago for Diplomats. He was studying at the American College in Rome when he became ill with TB.

FRANCELLE: Did your mother work closely with him when they had Fiestas? Wasn't he involved with all of that?

LOUIS: He helped my family so much, because at first, during the time when my grandmother was single and having to care for the two daughters, and he helped her out a lot, by providing clothing and things like that, because grandmother had helped him out during the Spanish Flu that all over the United States. So many of the Hispanics worked at ranches and Father Kemper would use his car with the help of my grandmother they would locate some of these people, check to see if they were all right. If they had the Spanish Flu they brought them into town and brought them to the Lady of Guadalupe Church, which he had built specifically for Hispanics because it was both a school and a church and he had contacted the Sisters of Charity in San Antonio one more time and had recruited a couple of nurses and nuns who were nurses and brought them back to take care of the sick. So he turned the school and the church into an infirmary.

FRANCELLE: What was the Spanish Flu, I'm not familiar with that?

LOUIS: The Spanish Flu if I am not mistaken was somewhere around 1920 or so, which engulfed a lot of people. It was close to the flu but it went through the United States kind of like TB did. A lot of people died from it. It was through their efforts that they were able to help people, they went out to the ranches to help the Hispanics who worked out there because they very seldom came into town.

FRANCELLE: What year did you graduate from Tivy?

LOUIS: I graduated from Tivy in 1948. After that I attended Schreiner Institute and Schreiner was a military school who taught grades 9 – 12 in high school and your first two years of college. It was also a Junior College. It was an excellent school, now I believe it is a University. I attended there for two years and then I went to North Texas State which is now called the University of North Texas. When I was

at North Texas, I think the peak enrollment was 5,000 students. They had an incredible music department, especially their jazz department.

FRANCELLE: Were you drafted?

LOUIS: I was drafted, twice. I took a pre induction physical while I was at North Texas. The process for that is to see if you are qualified to be in the services, so I took that at Love Field in Dallas and came back and I think I was 1A or something like that, I forget what the terminology was, which made me perfectly fit for the Armed Services to be drafted. I went back to North Texas and shortly thereafter I was drafted and received a summons to appear at Fort Sam Houston. They would take me from Kerrville on the Kerrville Bus Company to San Antonio along with other people who were going to be in the Armed Services. I was drafted to be in the Army, so I dropped out of North Texas and my folks went up there and picked up all of my belongings and I came to Kerrville. So I said if I'm going to be drafted I had just come back about three weeks before I was supposed to go to San Antonio to Fort Sam Houston, during the time I was here, I was walking up the steps to our Post Office here when I heard someone calling my name. So I turned around and it was this gentleman who I knew very well and he was on the draft board here in Kerrville. We talked for a couple of minutes and then he told me how sorry he was that I had been drafted. He asked me why I didn't go to school so we wouldn't have had to draft you. You would have been exempt if you were in school. I said, "Where do you think I received the summons?" He said, "Where?" I told him I was going to school at North Texas. He said, "Oh my God, can you get back in?" I told him I didn't have the slightest idea. So I came home and called up the dean and he said, "Well, you've missed almost four weeks, let's see if the professors will accept you." They did and it was a struggle because there were a lot of things that happened while I was gone. I was married to a young lady from Fort Worth, Bobbie Ann Trigg and we got married in Denton.

FRANCELLE: Is that why you were at North Texas?

LOUIS: Yes, that's why I was still in North Texas. I also had the brilliant idea about, let's get this over with, so I came back and went into the service. I went to Fort Sam and at that time I was assigned to be in the Signal Corp. I received that training in Camp Luis Obispo, in California. I was scheduled to stay on as an instructor, but at that time, since my dad had been born in Mexico City and I had to have a high security clearance they didn't want to go through all of that trouble. So, I was shipped overseas.

FRANCELLE: How long were you in the service?

LOUIS: I was in the service for two years. I went to Japan the day after Thanksgiving, the Korean War was going full blast and they told the thousands of guys I shipped over with to forget about what branch of service you're in, you are going to be infantry and we're all going to Korea. So we were all resolved to the fact that was

happening. We arrived in Japan without going through the process there. About five of us were pulled from actually going to Korea and we were given assignments in Japan. I worked at Camp Drake which was about 15 miles from downtown Tokyo and I spent 20 months there. I was very fortunate that I didn't have to go to Korea; I had a lot of buddies that had to go there.

FRANCELLE: Did Bobbie stay here?

LOUIS: Yes she did, she was pregnant at the time with Toni. Toni, my oldest, was born when I was overseas. I left the day after Thanksgiving and Tony was born on April 1st. Gina was then born after I got back home.

FRANCELLE: How did you find out Tony was born?

LOUIS: I received a phone call from my folks, it was wonderful news and then after that I would receive photographs.

FRANCELLE: How long was Torres' actually in business?

LOUIS: If you figure that the actual business was started by my grandmother in 1928 and my grandfather died in 1929 and it continually operated business until 2004 when I sold it. Roughly it was about 75 years. It was quite a journey.

FRANCELLE: Where y'all open every day?

LOUIS: It was crazy. The Tortilla Factory was closed on Sunday, Saturday was a big day. When I built the restaurant out there, Sunday was a big day, so we operated 7 days a week there. It was a killing schedule, later on we closed on Monday, but we were open at the Tortilla Factory, so we would switch working at the restaurant and then we would come back to the Tortilla Factory. We didn't have a lot of vacation time. We worked about 18 hours a day. I joke about being at my fighting weight, I weighed about 140 in the service and I went down to about 111 when I was working there.

FRANCELLE: Later on you married Joppy, can you tell us about that?

LOUIS: I met Joppy after my divorce and we dated about two or three years and then we got married. She is a dynamic lady; she could get more done in five minutes than I could ever get accomplished in a week. She was a hairstylist at the time and owned her own salon. She was very successful and a workaholic. She has a great personality and everybody loved her. We were married for 20 some odd years and in 1989, she got breast cancer. She had chemo but no radiation and after 20 months or so she was declared cancer free. We were tickled pink and went on with our lives and about 10 years later around 1998 or '99 it came back. It wasn't just breast cancer, she had it everywhere. She was given two weeks to two months to live and she lasted 20 months. It was really an ordeal, but she was smiling all the way.

FRANCELLE: And your present wife?

LOUIS: Here again, I have been blessed. I'm married to Rosemary and she and I both lost spouses. She was from Houston, born in Corpus and lived in Houston. Her father was in the oil business and she received a degree from Florida Southern. I had known her husband, Carl Meek, very successful real estate person, especially selling large ranches, not only here in Texas, but all over the west. I had known her and her mother, who were customers of mine through the years. She had lost Carl and I lost Joppy, whose real name was Josephine, I always called her Josephine and I think I was the only one that did. Fate has it that she has me to contend with now. I have one last story. My mom and dad were divorced, dad left Kerrville shortly thereafter, this was during WWII, and they divorced when I was 11 or 12. He went to Seattle and work at the Boeing Company. After the war, he returned to Mexico City and was married. During this time, I had the restaurant out on the highway and we would stay connected. I would go into Mexico City for the weekend and see him and fly back and all of that time, my girls' mother would take care of the restaurant.

FRANCELLE: Your dad died in Mexico?

LOUIS: Yes, he died in Mexico City and I went to his funeral, I think he had a stroke and Joppy and I went to his funeral. After he got into Mexico City he owned a couple of convenience stores and that's how he made a living.

FRANCELLE: That's great that you stayed connected with him.

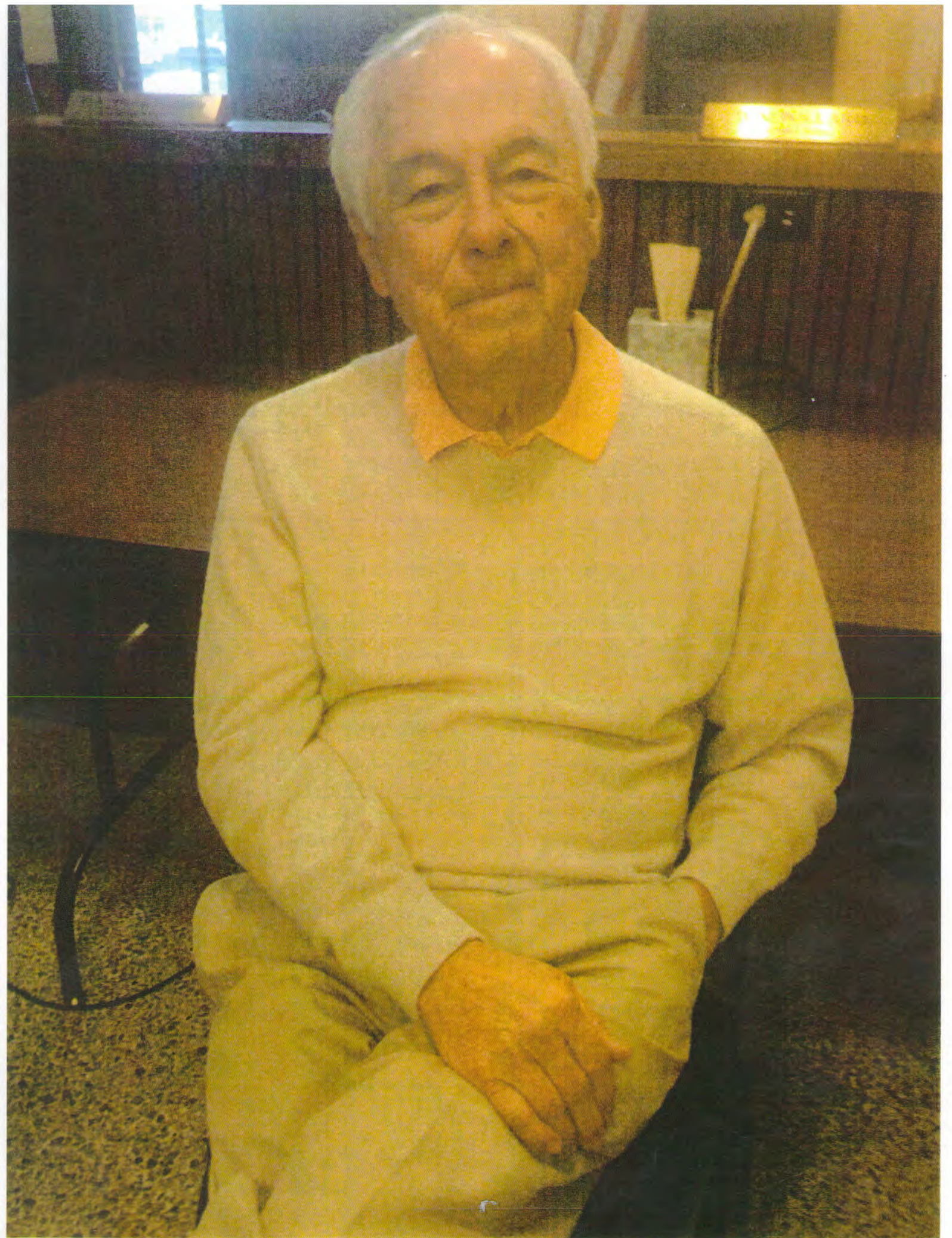
LOUIS: It was beautiful in Mexico City at that time. It was the romantic period at that time and I'm sort of a nut for those marvelous Mexican songs, not Mariachi or anything like that, but the trios and romantic songs and so I took advantage of that. I still had cousins in Mexico and we were able to get together, they were professional musicians, so it was fun being with them.

FRANCELLE: Did your mother go back to Mexico also?

LOUIS: No, they were divorced and mom stayed here for a while and employment was nil during that time. We had some dear friends that lived in California and they asked my mom to go there because there were jobs there. So she moved to California and she became a Qualities Manager for the Department of Agriculture and so kept busy. She remarried, the gentleman was from California, he was Greek and he was in the restaurant business. So she would come back every once in a while, so we kept in contact that way. Toni and Gina as youngsters would get on a plane and spend a week or two in California.

FRANCELLE: Thank you very much, I have really enjoyed this. I wish I would have known your grandmother.

END





PROUD PARENTS OF INFANT LOUIS: MARIA TORRES AND LOUIS D. ROMERO, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

YOUNG LOUIS





DELPHINA TORRES (IN MIDDLE OF PHOTO BELOW) AND FATHER KEMPER PICKED UP RESIDENTS IN RURAL KERR COUNTY WHO WERE SICK WITH THE SPANISH FLU AND TRANSPORTED THEM TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH AND SCHOOL WHICH SERVED AS A HOSPITAL. NUNS FROM SAN ANTONIO SERVED AS NURSES



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Night in Old Mexico to Aid Lions Charity

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The Lions Club will hold their eighth annual "Night in Old Mexico" Saturday night when a complete Mexican supper will be served by Mrs. Pete Torres on the slab in Louise Hays Park, followed by a live-wire Latin-American program with about 40 performers taking part. The entire proceeds of the supper and entertainment will go to the fund for the Lions Club's underprivileged children's Christmas baskets, according to Chief of Police Walter Moss, chairman of the entertainment.

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Tickets have been on sale for several weeks at \$1 each, which includes both the supper and the floor show. Supper will be served from 6:30 to 7:30, and the show will follow immediately afterward.

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Mrs. Torres, who has produced the affair for a number of years, will donate the food and entertainment, in order that the entire ticket sale may go to the charity fund, Moss said. Many of the entertainers will be professional and talented amateur talent from San Antonio. Thirty door prizes will be offered, in addition to the show and supper.

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NIGHT IN OLD MEXICO CROWD WITH EMCEE POLICE CHIEF WALTER MOSS IN LOWER PHOTO



MARIA
(Louis' MOTHER)

CARMEN
(AUNT)

DELFINA TORRES
(grandmother)



↑
O ME
LOUIS

NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC SCHOOL PHOTO. YOUNG LOUIS ON FRONT ROW



ROMAN F. CORTEZ AND WIFE CARMEN BUILT AND TOOK OVER OPERATION OF TORRES FOODS WHEN MRS. TORRES' HEALTH FAILED. BUSINESS WAS MOVED OUT OF HER HOME-LATE 40'S

LOUIS' MOTHER MARIA SERVING AT BLUEBONNET HOTEL LUNCHEON HONORING ADMIRAL NIMITZ.
WOMAN IN BEIGE SUIT IS NIMITZ' SISTER. ADMIRAL NIMITZ SEATED TO HER RIGHT

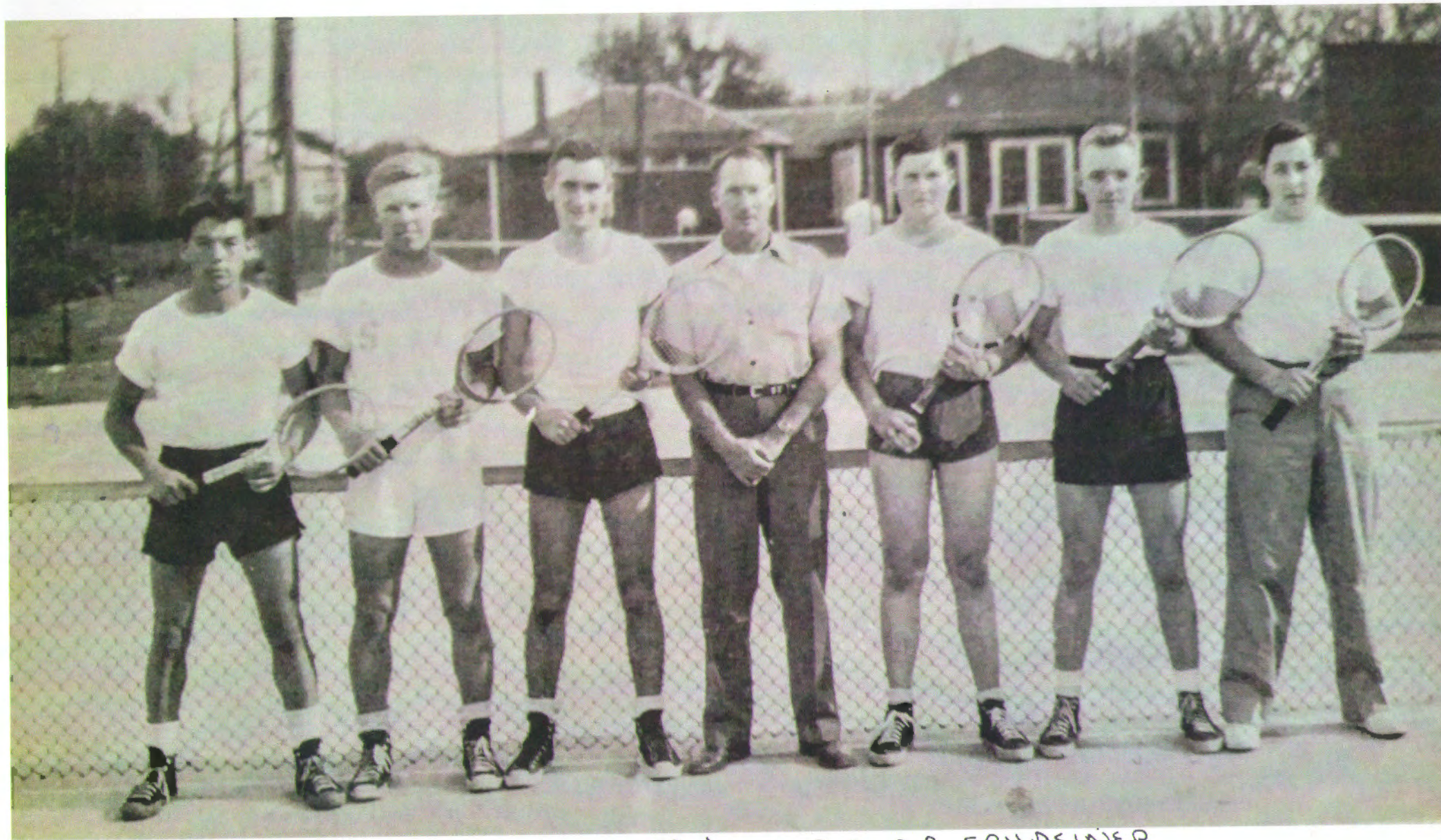


TENNIS 1949

As the 1949 Recall goes to press, the Schreiner Tennis Squad, coached by Houston R. Wheeler, shows every indication of achieving a highly successful season. Two newcomers to the squad, Buddy Satterwhite and Louis Romero, are the class of the courts, with Jimmie Gregg pushing them, followed closely by Al Johnson, Johnnie Stocks, and Seymour Clairfield. Early season matches with the San Antonio Junior College and San Angelo College resulted in wins for the Mountaineers, who expressed themselves as determined to make a showing in the Southwestern Junior College Conference in early May.



LOUIS ROMERO
Kerrville



LOUIS ROMERO (1ST ON LEFT) MEMBER OF SCHREINER
INSTITUTE TENNIS TEAM



Junkin and Romero, Day Students
second and first in table-tennis
singles.

COMPLIMENTS OF

TORRES FOODS

(Established 1927)

GENUINE MEXICAN FOODS



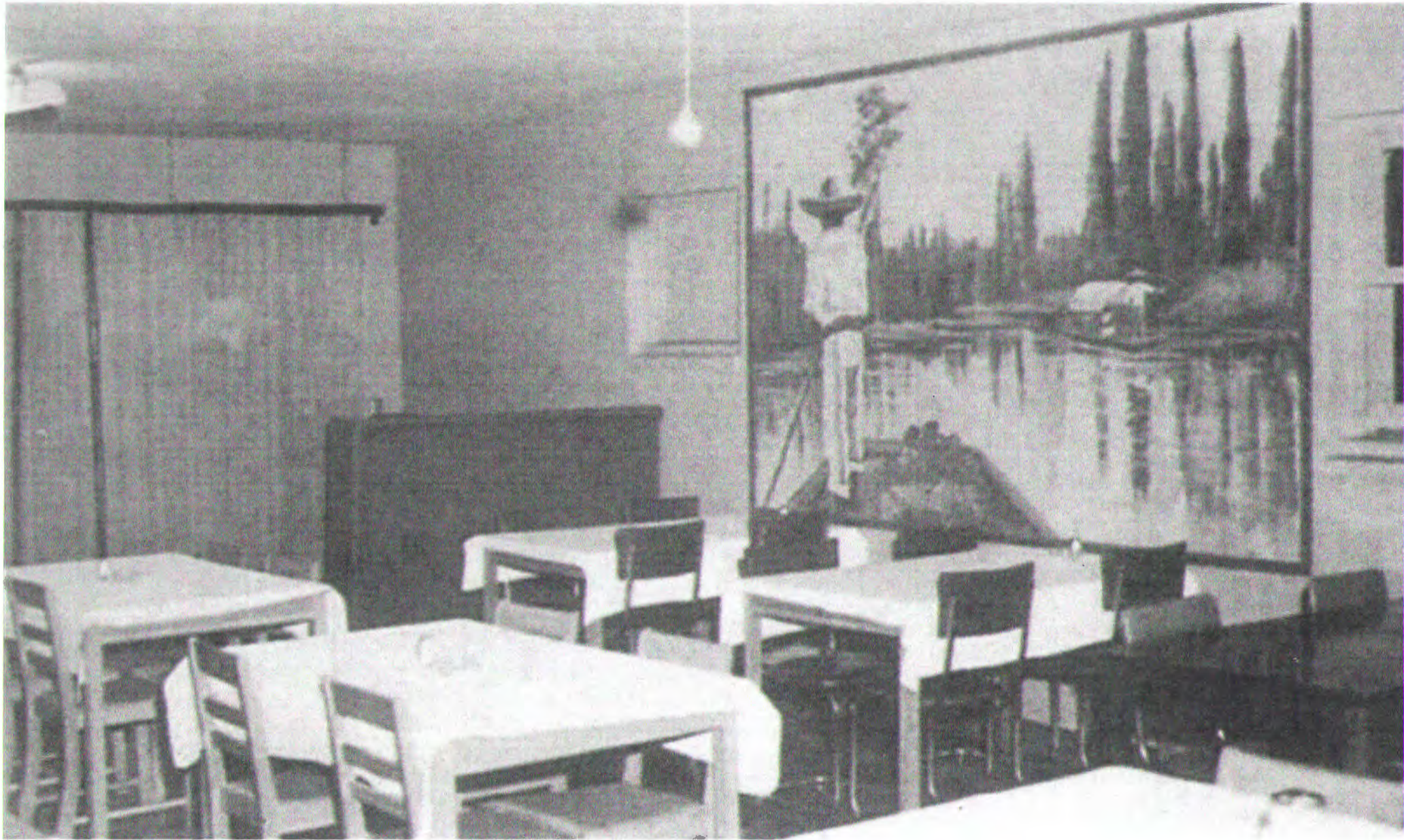
Dining Room

Wholesale & Take Out

Catering Service

228 JEFFERSON ST.

Phone CL 74646



TORRES RESTAURANT SHOWING MURAL PAINTED BY LOUIS

Happened here

Tortilla machine a wonder

by Forrest Salter

Ever wonder about the modest sign, "Tortilla Factory," on the neat white building at the corner of Main and Rodriguez Streets?

It's a great story and tradition. The firm was started by a wonderful lady named Mrs. Pete Torres, who cooked mouth-watering Mexican foods to take home during the depression. As a child it was a great treat to go by Mrs. Torres on the way home from work, and occasionally she would invite us to eat in her family dining room.

Business was good, so she had the small concrete block building erected at the corner, and ordered a tortilla machine from Mexico. This was a wondrous mechanism, clanking out fresh tortillas with precision. And Mrs. Torres also persuaded her grandson, Louis Romero, to paint murals on the walls of the dining room. (Two of them are there today.)

Mrs. Torres, and her family, were legendary. She worked in every worthwhile project in the land, including war bond sales, bloodmobile visits, etc. She even spearheaded the drive to send canned tamales to servicemen during World War II. (We ate ours off the coast of Iwo Jima.)

She was joined by her daughter, Carmen, and her husband, Raymond. They could whip up a Fiesta for 400 people on a moment's notice. For the big charity parties, Mrs. Torres called on her friend Bertha Almaguer, of the San Antonio Recreation Department. Bus loads of talented young performers would appear. Carmen and Raymond continued after her death, and the fabulous Mexican parties at the Dietert Claim were their contribution.

The whole family were extremely modest, and ducked publicity everytime they could. Mrs. Torres probably had two trunkfulls of news stories about her contributions. And her grandson, Louis, continues in the same almost shy manner. He received a fine arts degree in college, returned to Kerrville and opened a large restaurant on Highway 27 named "Torres." (This is now the location of La Fours.)

Louis gave up the big operation, mainly because he could not personally cook every dish, and returned to

the Tortilla Factory.

Quite frankly, we are prejudiced. We think he serves the finest Mexican food on the planet, and you can find a room full of patrons every noon who agree.

There is something most impressive about a third generation business, especially one that serves such great food!

BOBBIE
ANN
TRIGG
ROMERO
AT
TORRES
RESTAURANT
EARLY
1960's

BOBBIE
WAS
THE
MOTHER
OF
TONI
&
GINA



LOUIS ROMERO AND BRIDE JOSEPHINE SUTTI CANNES





WEDDING DAY - LAS BRISAS - 4-20-2002

FRONT ROW L to R
DAUGHTER

GINA ROMERO

LOUIS ROMERO

WIFE

ROSEMARY

DAUGHTER
TONI
ROMERO
BOX

BACK ROW L to R
STEP-DAUGHTERS

PAM DOOLEY MARY MARTHA MCNELIS