

## PREFACE

In late 1975, Octaviano L. "Chito" Longoria needed legal counsel in California to assist him in forcing Bank of America to release funds which were held in his name. He was already a litigant in major Texas and Mexican law suits against his four younger brothers Federico, Shelby, Eduardo, (Wayo), and Alfredo, (hereafter to be called "The Brothers") which involved who owned how much of vast industrial, banking, and real estate assets. Chito turned to his acquaintances in California for a reference. He was referred to my husband George H. Link.

Link agreed to handle the case, which, at that time, to be seemed to be a minor matter. As time passed, the case became complex and time consuming. Link spent three years in litigation and trial for Chito and, necessarily, a great deal of time in Texas and Mexico. I often joined Link, Chito, and his second wife Jeanette and met other players as the litigation drama was unfolding.

As a frequent house guest of the Longorias, Chito and I often passed the time playing double solitaire and backgammon. He often reminisced about his youth and his early years as a budding entrepreneur.

As the visits continued and our personal relationship matured, I became fascinated by the stories of Chito's life, the culture of Mexico, and the complex personal connections which aided Chito's rise as an important Mexican industrialist.

In the midst of my travels to Mexico, I was accepted at UCLA in the graduate history department. Because of my experiences in Mexico, twentieth-century Mexican history became my logical and enthusiastic field of research. After receiving a Master of Arts in history, both Chito and the UCLA department of history acceded to my request for permission to write a dissertation on Chito's life and business career. For the next several years, Mexico and Texas were the sites of oral recordation of Chito's history.

Chito agreed to give me thirty file-drawers of business records which were stored in the basement of his Mexico City home. The actual shipment of the business archives took months. Several Mexico City moving companies refused to ship them. They were fearful that the Mexican government might not approve of shipping sensitive business documents to the United States.

Finally, Chito's wife Jeanette arranged for an official campaign bus of the PRI to pick up the archives and transport them from Mexico City to Nuevo Laredo. I

arranged for a Texas moving company to pick up the archives in Nuevo Laredo and ship them to me in California. At the border, Mexican customs officials were not the least interested in the contents of the boxes. United States customs officers were. After extensive negotiations between the moving company and United States Customs Office, the archives crossed the border. After six months, the archives reached California.

Not only did Chito give me his business archives, he also agreed to give me all of his litigation documents and waived any attorney-client and attorney work product privileges, in order that I could have access to the lawyers' work and their recollections. He then shipped to me all his remaining business and personal records and United States litigation documents. That shipment consisted of another twenty cases of documents containing not only personal correspondence, wills, property deeds, bank correspondence, loan statements credit checks, and inter-bank memos which described the expansion of Chito's businesses, but also analyses of Mexico's business climate in general. The shipment also included the depositions of Chito, The Brothers, relatives, and employees of the Longoria enterprises. The shipment contained annual financial statements of the Longoria enterprises for fifteen years, and the testimony of accountants from Price

Waterhouse, Mexico City, who were the accountants for Empresas Longoria the principal industrial holding company. No trouble was encountered in shipping the litigation documents to California because they were stored in San Antonio, Texas, where they had been transported for Chito's United States litigation.

Now I had too much information. The next several years were spent sorting through the documents, putting them in order, and reading and translating them.

From tapes and transcriptions of Chito's oral history, which was the first phase of the project, the logical conclusion was that the collapse of Chito's industries resulted from the hostility of the Mexican government. In large part, this was Chito's position. From the thousands of other documents, it became clear that this was not necessarily the case. Rather, it became increasingly clear that the government did all it could to help, up to a certain point. But, there were many other factors involved in the disintegration of Chito's businesses.

The question may well be asked, can a personal friend write an unbiased history? The answer may well be no. Nevertheless, an important personal relationship allowed me to understand the main actor, including his prejudices, passions, candor, and obfuscations. The massive records and voluminous testimony of many others gave additional

perspectives. Chito's unfortunate death, which occurred before the completion of this work, allowed me some flexibility to critique Chito's life without being forced or cajoled by Chito to a conclusion more amenable to his own point of view. But documents and interviews tell a story that does not always jibe with Chito's own oral history.

The history of O.L. Longoria is a case study in elitelore. Elitelore theory is concerned with analyzing the lore of leaders and the way leaders invent lore about themselves and their followers. The theory argues that elites exist at all levels of society and that, just as the folk have lore that helps them structure their reality, so, too, do elites have lore that serves to maintain and justify their position.<sup>1</sup>

Chito's oral history is his history as he perceived himself. It justified the manner in which he conducted his businesses and his life. One of the tenets of elitelore is that the subject, in oral history interviews, gives selected information, albeit half consciously, to protect the ego. This was true of Chito. He was often vague or avoided mention of important events in his life. His oral history is used extensively in the description of his early

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1 Lorey, David, and Wilkie, James. "I" as "We" in Elitelore: the Merging of Individual and Collective Lores." Journal of Latin American Lore 13:1, p. 4. 1987.

years. Documents from other sources generally supported his oral history for that period. In his oral description of the litigation period, Chito was not as candid as he was in his description of his early years probably because the memories were so painful.

Conflict between documents and Chito's oral history are indicated. For the period beginning with the break up of his industries, I rely increasingly on bank and litigation documents. My conclusions are derived from a comparison of oral history documents, bank and litigation documents, my own detective work, and research.

The attempt to corroborate through others, certain significant statements which Chito made in his oral history and in his depositions was difficult if not impossible. These men were more than willing to discuss many things, but when I asked about certain sensitive events or contemporary politicians, they declined to answer, asserted that they still worked or had family in Mexico, and stated that it would be impolitic to answer my questions. In these instances, Chito's statements or secondary sources remained the sole sources.

This work is a study of intricacies involved in the rise and fall of a significant, twentieth-century, Mexican entrepreneur. It is also a study of traditional, yet

complex, Hispanic family relationships which were destroyed by contemporary economic and political reality.

Can generalities be made from this study for all Mexican entrepreneurs during the period of 1930 to 1970? This work may give insight into the complexities of the rise of an entrepreneur from Northern Mexico. Without research from other areas of the country and from other periods, however, it is premature to generalize. During the preparation of this work, I interviewed other entrepreneurs from elsewhere in Mexico who were operating during the same period (1930-1970). Their stories and those of their families and business associates had a striking similarity.

I would not have completed, or, for that matter, even started this project without the enthusiastic support of my husband George Link and our children Thomas and Christopher. George's generosity, both intellectual and financial, has been unerring. The word grateful comes to mind, but it is not adequate. James W. Wilkie, chairman of my dissertation committee and mentor, was instrumental in encouraging me at all stages. His tact, support and patience are greatly appreciated, more than words can describe.

Finally, I am indebted to Chito and his wife Jeanette for allowing me access to Chito's life and his documents.