

CHAPTER X

EPILOGUE

This chapter relates the events which occurred after the formal settlement of the disputes between The Brothers and Chito and traces his life until his death in 1986.

After Chito had settled with The Brothers, he invested vast sums of money in Texas land and oil speculation. Chito was certain that he could become as successful in Texas as he had once been in Mexico. All it took was capital, of which he had, at the time, an ample supply. Sadly, this was not to be the case.

Chito bought five thousand acres in Atascosa County, around Jourdanton, Texas, and instituted elaborate farming operations. Naturally, he owned the land through an off-shore corporation in the Netherland Antilles for tax reasons. Chito was convinced that inflation would continue in the United States, and his land would double or triple in value. Nothing but state-of-the-art equipment was good enough for his ranches. He stocked the ranches with his beloved Santa Gertrudis cattle, and seeded and leveled fields for planting feed. The irrigation system was a

modern miracle. Wells were dug for water (at vast expense) and the irrigation system was elaborate, with automatic sprinklers attached to mobile lines hundreds of feet long which rotated.

Texas was just beginning to experience the oil glut, and prices for oil, real estate, and farm products began to plummet. Through his off-shore company, Chito had bought the land when prices were high and could not afford to maintain the elaborate farming operations, much less pay the mortgages. He had also invested heavily with Morris Jaffe in oil speculation when the market plunged. Furthermore, he invested 1.5 million in an oil partnership with Jeffrey Jaffe, and drilled 12 dry holes. By 1982, a Texas oil man could not even give away an oil rig. Chito had lost all the ready cash that he had gained from his settlement with The Brothers.

As the realization of his debacle dawned on Chito, he lapsed into another depression and Jeanette was forced to intervene. She enlisted the aid of her brother Ronald Herrmann, who was a Texas attorney, and together they arranged the sale of the elaborate farm equipment on Chito's ranches. They auctioned off the cattle and leased the ranches to tenant farmers. With the rental income, they managed to save the ranches from foreclosure and continued paying the mortgages.

Chito had given his Mexican businesses and many of his Mexican real estate assets to the children of his first wife, Alice. He gave the automobile agencies to Tad Brittingham and Laredo Lumber to Chito Jr. He also gave Chito Jr. and his cousin Ramon Salido the Cadillac Bar, charging them a pittance for rent.

Chito no longer felt comfortable in Mexico. Shortly after the settlement with The Brothers, he decided to move permanently to the United States, to live in San Antonio. By 1980 he had come to believe that The Brothers had cheated him, and he was the loser in the final settlement. He was totally preoccupied with instigating new law suits to regain lands and businesses to which he thought he was entitled. Fortunately, nothing came of his plans.

He became disinterested in the day to day operation of the remaining assets that he controlled in Mexico and left the administration to his sons-in-law. Directly after the settlement with The Brothers, he had placed the various parts of Rancherías in the names of his children and grandchildren. The central portion of Rancherías he placed in the name of his youngest daughter, Jeanettita. As usual, it was understood that the transfer of title from The Brothers into the names of the children and grandchildren was a formality, and not an outright gift.

Although Rancherías was the single largest ranch in Mexico he chose to ignore it.

In an interesting sidelight to the settlement with The Brothers, in relation to Rancherías, Wayo had begged at the end of the settlement negotiations to be allowed to keep his small ranch that was on the periphery of Rancherías. Because Wayo had suffered the most during the litigation, Chito relented. He allowed Wayo to keep his "little ranch" because it meant so much to him.

On the day Chito took possession of Rancherías, he discovered the ranch to be largely barren of cattle. As a parting shot, The Brothers had herded all of the cattle that belonged Chito onto Wayo's "little ranch" and sold them. Wayo's "little ranch" was nothing but a holding pen for thousands of head of Chito's cattle which The Brothers sold at auction.

Chito left the management of Rancherías to Tad Brittingham, his son-in-law. Thousands of hectares were cleared of brush and planted. Chito built and regraded roads, which at completion totaled over five hundred miles. He acquired modern equipment to keep the ranch cleared and maintained. On Chito's orders, the ranch was restocked with cattle, naturally Santa Gertrudis. After the initial euphoria of regaining his ranch and repairing it, Chito lost interest and asked few questions. He did not like to

travel to the ranch, but rather he sat for hours playing gin rummy and backgammon in his home in San Antonio, Texas. He appeared loath to return to his home town where his family was still resided and felt bitterness towards him.

The central portion of Rancherías was magnificent once again, and contained the African wild game. There was an abundance of zebra, all three varieties, wildebeest, dromedaries, gazelles, antelopes and giraffe. The Brothers had maintained the high fences to enclose the wild game. All the animals were still intact save the lions. It was an incredible sight to behold. One could drive through the central section and encounter massive herds of zebra and gazelle racing and leaping across the land at incredible speed.

With Rancherías in good order, Jeanette insisted that Chito make a new will. Chito had declared on numerous occasions that he had taken care of his older children, but that he had yet to make a will which included his youngest daughter Jeanettita. Since Chito was filled with lethargy, it took time. When the will was actually drawn, Chito left his remaining assets to Jeanettita, including an industrial park that he was building on the outskirts of Nuevo Laredo, where Empacadora de México had once operated. He left Jeanette entirely out of the will, assuming that she had

enough financial resources of her own, and if not, that her six Jaffe children would always see to her wellbeing.

In 1983, Jeanette finally completed a property settlement with Morris Jaffe, her first husband. The settlement had taken the better part of fifteen years. She sold her half interest in the Central Park Mall in San Antonio, Texas, to her six Jaffe children. In this manner the mall remained within the Jaffe family, and Jeanette obtained a monthly principle and income payments on a multi-million dollar promissary note for thirty years, enough to support her life style. She also was given title to her old home at 300 Alameda Circle in San Antonio. It was through these revenues and assets that Jeanette supported Chito in his remaining years.

In March of 1985, Chito celebrated his eightieth birthday with a huge celebration in Nuevo Laredo which lasted for four days. At Jeanette's insistence, all of his brothers and sisters were invited along with the their children and the extended Longoria family. The Brothers, The Sisters and Chito had finally made their peace. But Chito's immediate family was not as sanguine.

Because of several serious disagreements over the mismanagement of Rancherías by Brittingham, Chito's elder

children became alienated from their father.¹ The older children, it appears, believed that they would be given more substantial assets than they received after an agreement had been reached with The Brothers. They never believed Chito when he told them that all the easily accessible money was gone. Chito was still a very wealthy man by any standard, but his assets were real property, and not liquid. The older children thought he was squandering the money on his new wife and her children and refused to believe Jeanette when she told them that not only were her children not taking money from Chito, but her six Jaffe children were supporting them. Brittingham, Sara Alicia, and Chito Jr. never spoke to Chito again. Gloria, Chito's younger daughter, continued to visit Chito daily, refusing to join in the family disagreement.

Late in 1985, Chito was hospitalized in San Antonio. He could no longer control his shaking hands, and the doctors thought that perhaps the carotid artery, located in his neck, was blocked. He was operated upon to clear the

¹ Part of Chito's birthday celebration took place at Rancherías. Governor Guillermo Rossell de la Lama arrived at the celebration in a helicopter. Upon his departure, he invited Chito to take ride with him to view the ranch from the air. At his return from the flight, Chito was visibly shaken. All of the African wild game had disappeared along with most of the cattle. One can only speculate on what transpired at Rancherías over the past few years, but it seems likely that the older children had profited from private and well heeled hunters who were allowed to shoot the wild game.

artery and he seemed somewhat better, but it did not last. Soon he had trouble walking and could no longer manage to use the stairways in their home in San Antonio. It appeared that a paralysis was creeping through his body.

After numerous and lengthy consultations with doctors in Texas, the consensus was that Chito had developed amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. The cause is unknown and there is no cure. The disease causes a progressive degeneration of the nerve cells which control voluntary motor functions.² Chito, as a Mexican citizen and unemployed, had no medical insurance. On each occasion that he was hospitalized in Texas, the six Jaffe children helped Jeanette pay the costs. In their never ending search for money, Jeanette and Chito did not have enough to cover such vast expenses. Round-the-clock nurses were needed to care for him when he returned home from his hospital stays.

In 1986, unable to manage the high medical expenses and supervised home care in the United States, Chito and Jeanette and their daughter returned to their Mexico City residence. Chito proceeded to deteriorate further, and since there was no hope of a cure, it was best for him to be back in the country he loved.

² Complete Home Medical Guide, p. 599.

Less than a year before, he had been a vital and proud man. Within a few months he could not speak or move, only make nonsensical groans which no one could understand. He was still able to move his eyelids and Jeanette, who seemed to understand what he meant, could ask him questions. He faintly moved his lids to indicate yes or no in response to questions asked. His alert mind was trapped in a body that refused to function. He had disintegrated into a shriveled and aged man strapped into a wheel chair.

There was no sleep in the Longoria household. The nights were filled with Chito's unending groans. His nurses thought that Chito was less agitated if they walked him in his wheelchair throughout the night, up and down the halls. As the house was made of marble, the groans reverberated through every room. He could not sleep, no one could sleep. Chito could only groan.

Chito mercifully died on December 2, 1986.

An elaborately detailed private funeral service was held in Mexico City at his home in Bosques de las Lomas. Many Mexcian politicians and fellow industrialists attended. The service was televised. One day later, in Nuevo Laredo, smaller services were held which were attended by his brothers, sisters, children and Jaffes. He was laid to rest next to his first wife, Alice.

In 1987, the three older Longoria children filed suit in Mexico against Jeanettita demanding an equal share of the residue of Chito's estate which was left in his will to Jeanettita. The animosity and the litigation goes on.

Jeanette and Jeanettita continued to live in Mexico City in the house in Bosques de las Lomas which was left by Chito to Jeanettita, commuting to Jeanette's homes in San Antonio, Texas, and her apartment in New York City. A major portion of their time and financial resources was spent defending Chito's last will and testament against the lawsuits brought by the older Longoria children. At this writing, the elder children seem to have lost their law suit against Jeanettita, but in Mexico nothing is ever certain.

Rancherías, which Chito had placed in the names of his children and grandchildren, is still in dispute. Chito before his death demanded that his children return their titles to the various ranches to him since they had abused his beloved African game. The children refused. Jeanettita is legally entitled to the ranch which Chito always kept in his own name, but as it is located at the center of the ranch, she has no access. The battles continue.

Chito was astute in his demand for the return of Rancherías from The Brothers. The Mexican government is

planning to build another bridge across the Río Grande directly adjacent to Rancherías. The ranch land will eventually be more valuable than even Chito ever envisioned.

Federico, who successfully sold Banco Longoria before the bank nationalization in 1982, retired and gave his remaining businesses and assets to his children. He continued to live in Nuevo Laredo with his American born wife, an important man in a small city.

Shelby remained in Matamoros, supervising ELSA's plants and gins which he and Alfredo bought from their two brothers. Another important man along the northeastern frontier of Mexico.

Wayo retired from active involvement in his businesses, giving the control of his remaining assets to his son. He and his son invested heavily in land speculation around Austin, Texas, and it was rumored that they also lost most of their assets when land values in Texas plummeted in conjunction with the oil glut. Wayo was also kidnapped and held for ransom in the early 1980's. It was rumored that his family paid two million dollars for his safe return.

Alfredo continued to live in Mexico City and run what remained of ELSA. He parleyed ELSA's assets once again into a significant Mexican corporation and he is considered

within the Mexican business community to be an astute and successful industrialist. The United States banks that once loaned money to Chito for ELSA's expansion are doing the same for Alfredo. An informed source said that Alfredo's success was a reflection of his eldest brother, Chito. He had a good teacher.