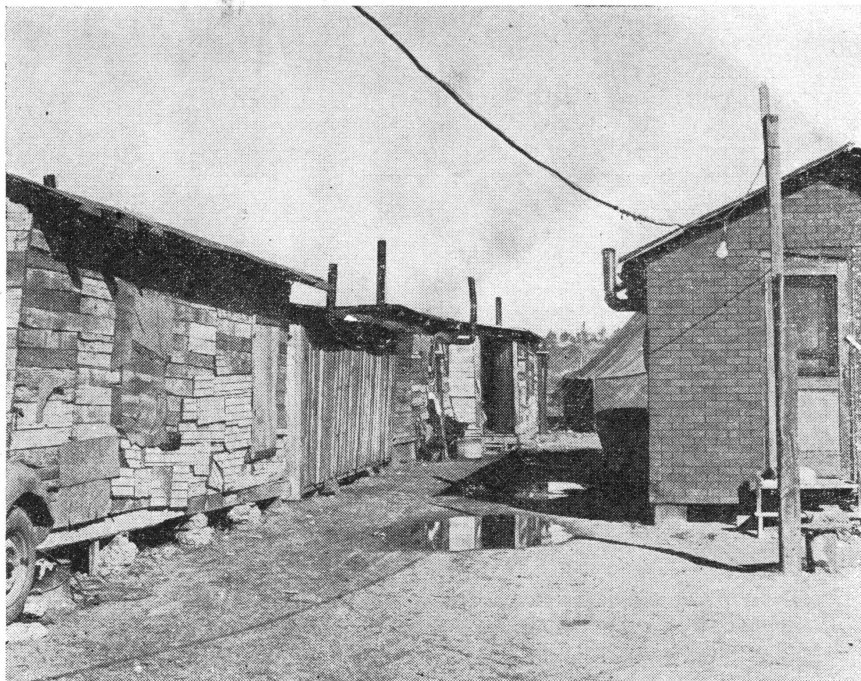




*A sun-darkened migrant worker holds his most important tool—the hoe*



*Home for the migrant worker is usually a battered shack or lean-to. There is no plumbing, and one pump often serves for eighty families*

# His Name is Gonzales

by  
**THEODORE J. RADTKE**  
**PART ONE**

**T**ITO GONZALES drove his 1934 Ford up to the yellow and red gasoline pump, glanced at the man in the doorway of the crumbling service station, and turned the well-worn key to cut off the motor. This place by the roadside looked disreputable enough; all the family climbed down to wander about stretching their legs after the hours of travel under the Oklahoma sun.

Here on the outskirts of the town it was not likely that the police would spy them and scan their faces with those searching stares. Perhaps they could get by without anyone asking them questions.

"Put in five ga-lones—chiip gas," he called out in his "Mexican" accent.

There were eight of them—their name, Gonzales—to leave that sagging automobile, young ones and old ones, big ones and baby. There was a mattress tied to the top; a sack of beans and chili peppers rested form-fitting on the front fender. Some of them climbed down over the right side where the running board was loaded with pots and pans and an extra can for water.

Like thousands every year in April, Tito Gonzales was traveling to the beet fields in the North for work. There was real work in the northern fields all sum-

mer. There was nothing in the Texas country he called "home" until the cotton harvest in August and September.

If the "wetbacks" could all be driven south of the border into Mexico and made to stay there, men like Gonzales would have an honest chance to earn a living for their families in their homeland. But the "wetback" will work for twenty cents an hour. That is good wages across the border. There he earns only twenty-five cents a day. He can easily go back and forth by wading the Rio Grande at night. He is not an American citizen, of course, but who is there to stop him? When he is hired on the south Texas ranches, he gets what the rancher chooses to give him—that is, twenty cents an hour.

Tito Gonzales is an American citizen; he lives in the United States. He cannot keep his family on twenty cents an hour.

It is better to work in the beet fields in the North. Tito's neighbor, Pepe Hernandez, was up there last year and he made much money. He even bought a "new" car before he came back to Texas in December. He said he hoed the beets, and all the kids worked, too, and he did one hundred acres.

"María, how much is one hundred a-cres? *Caramba!* Seventeen dolares for

one a-cre—this is many hundred dolares Pepe is make in the *betabeles*."

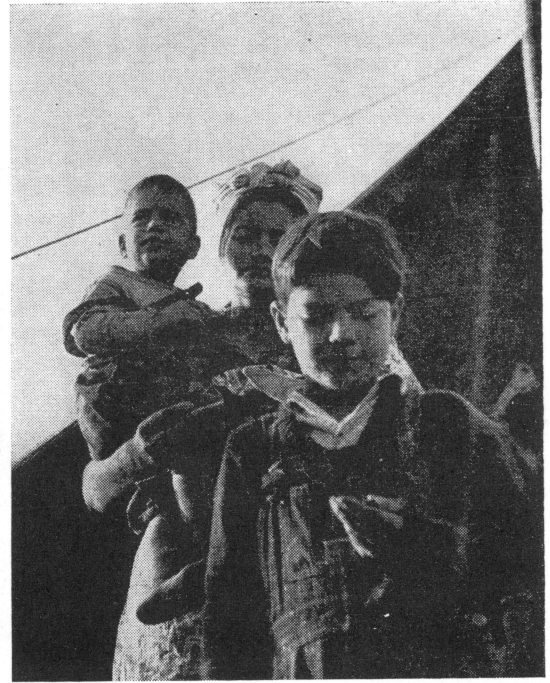
Tito's English was not good. As a growing boy he lived on a ranch many miles from the nearest schoolhouse and he was needed on the ranch for work. Otherwise, his father, Macedonio, could not buy enough *frijoles* to keep his big family alive.

Those were the good days, those days on the ranch. There was no truant officer ever to stop by and warn Macedonio to send his children to school. There were enough children in the schoolhouse already. Macedonio could never afford the shoes and the clothes it would require to send Alicia, Margarita, and Tito, Jorge, Juan, and Pepe to school.

**M**ACEDONIO liked it in the fall during the cotton harvest when he had much money and could go to the cantina with his friends and drink there a "hundred beers" (he always said). Then he would boast of his children with his chest pulling the shirt buttons and tell his friends—those good cantina friends, "Pancho, *fijate*—what this my Tito has done. Today he pick almost one hundred pounds. One hundred pounds, Pancho! That is three dollar for me and my Ernestina."



*Every jalopy carries cans of water to fill the steaming radiator on the hot Texas roads and to slake the thirst of the riders*



*Children of the workers get little schooling and work in the fields at an early age*

### **A very human account of the trials of a migrant worker, who travels far and slaves long hours in the field to keep his family from starvation**

Tito was only one of the 200,000 children in Texas who never went to school for even one day. Today his own children were only six of the 200,000. Perhaps, should he earn as much as Pepe Hernandez last year in the beet fields up North, he will send his children to school next September. Pepe sent two of his children to school when he arrived "home" in Crystal City last December. The teachers placed them in a special group. They had to learn A, B, C first. But Pepe's Roberto was already eleven years old, and Roberto surely did not like the ordeal of going to school. The other children made sport of him because he was "dumb."

The man at the service station was amiable enough. He had seen many a jalopy like this pass by; many another had stopped for gas and oil.

"The water—he is gone from our jug. Can I fill heem here?"

"Go ahead, take all you want. It's cheap. Say, where you people from?"

Tito stopped and looked at the man for a long time before he answered. He studied the man's face carefully again to read there a possibly sinister meaning in the question. People who asked such questions were usually not friends. He

finally shifted his eyes back toward Maria, then to the ground, then he moved deliberately toward the water hose.

With studied carelessness he said, "Texas."

"Lot-a people coming through from Texas these days," the man rattled on while the gasoline trickled down into the tank. "They all think there's good jobs up in Michigan and Minnesota. Hope they find 'em. Me, I like to stay right here—just sell 'em gas an' oil—give 'em all the water they want. 'Taint none of my business what they're doin'."

Tito was relieved by this last outburst.

There were 100,000 others, of whom Tito knew very little, coming out of Texas in cars and trucks. The trek began in April and did not end until October. They traveled hundreds and thousands of miles to find work in the fields—anywhere, but especially in the fields. In the fields it was muscle and brawn and stamina that counted.

Those who could read and write were certainly to be envied. They could appreciate a contract; they could buy a newspaper and discover what was taking place in the countryside; they could be

hired to supervise those who have only muscle and brawn and stamina to sell. This, too, Tito did not know—they could also cheat with numbers. But a man has to work and earn for his family, and if Pepe Hernandez could buy a "new" car there must be money in the North in the fields. No one can live on twenty cents an hour.

The car smoked oil down the road. The baby took sick and Maria said they should stop and rest for a while. By a culvert over a little stream they got down and stretched on the cool thick grass growing in the shade. Inez and Tomás and Arturo were kicking splashes at each other wading in the creek. Did it matter that their clothes got wet? They would soon be dry in the hot sun. And the water was a great, cool blessing for the crusted, unshod feet of dispossessed youngsters. Here was an ecstasy of joy, a moment of tickling delight, in a day of stuffy misery on wheels at forty miles an hour.

A CAR zoomed overhead, then suddenly seemed to slow down. Tito stood up to listen. Yes, it had slowed down; it had stopped. He ran to the top of the embankment.

"María! Los policías!"

It was ordinary routine for the highway patrol. The car off to the side of the road appeared to be abandoned. They were only checking—their regular chore. They turned and came back and stopped alongside.



"This yours?"

"*Si, señor*, it is *mi carro*." Tito was floundering in his English. He wanted to say the right things. All the wrong words came out first.

"You own this car? . . . Where you going? . . . You an American citizen? . . . Where's your home?"

Tito managed to make his answers understood. María rummaged through all the belongings in her purse to find the certificate of registration for the automobile, identification, citizenship papers, her own baptismal record.

"All right. But you better make sure you hang onto those papers!"

He could pass—*Gracias a Dios*.

"The papers! María, you must not lose the papers!"

**M**ICHIGAN in April can be cold. It is good to have a house around you and a fire. It is about the same in Ohio, and in Minnesota and North Dakota, even in Indiana and Illinois. There were many like Gonzales going into Nebraska and Colorado, into Montana, and Idaho, and Washington.

"Where you from?"

"Texas."

Tito went to the camp in the fields in Michigan where Pepe Hernandez said he worked last year. How old the cities looked! The air seemed dirty with smoke all the time. The bricks on the buildings were coated with black soot, not white and clean and fresh like the cities, downtown, in Texas. Yes, it was different in the *colonia*, in "Mexican town"; there the "houses" never knew paint and there was no green grass to decorate the yard. There were only mud streets without sewers; there were out-houses and no plumbing in the *colonia*. But downtown . . .

The "camp" was not precisely a camp. It was located in a grove of trees just off one of the side roads that split two onion fields. There stood here what appeared to be the remainder of someone's lean-to. Not far off stood another; then another. The little shacks must have been hauled to this spot on a truck. Someone had set them down haphazardly here on four or six cement blocks, there on tree stumps. The door was not a door, and the windows were not windows. The frames were gone; tenants in the past had taken their toll of property damage.

A few tents pointed their poles into the branches; they bulged from the overflow of the cramped huts. Wires were strung from tree to tree; wash was hanging on the line. There seemed to be seventy, perhaps eighty, people sitting, working, younger ones playing in the



*Workers form a queue in front of pay station. After bills from the company store are deducted, little is left for the future*

area. The women were scrubbing clothes at the door of every hut and tent in a basin. One had the good fortune to bring along a washtub; she was the envy of them all.

Tito was looking over the scene from where he stopped on the dirt road.

"María, this looks like the place Pepe talked about."

Tito went over to where several men were leaning against a tree. They paid him little attention, as if they meant to say, "This looks like another one." A handful of the children stopped their games to look on at the newcomer.

Tito came closer and stopped to gaze about before he spoke. His eyes now took in the rear of the camp cluttered with brush and undergrowth, tin cans and bottles. There was a narrow path that led away into a ravine. A dog plied his scavenging for scant food in the compost heap. Off to his left from the far end of the row of huts came a teen-age lad carrying a bucketful of water. Tito looked farther and saw the pump poised on the end of a well-pipe that grew three feet out of the ground. It was out in the open field a half block away. It was the only water supply he could see.

"*Buenas tardes, señores.*"

"*Buenas tardes . . . Que tal?*" The men made answer to his greeting in different forms of their musical tongue.

"This is the place you come for the work, no?" Gonzales questioned. He followed through with the explanation that he had just arrived from Texas—from Crystal City in the state of Texas. He was looking for work in the betabeles—the beets where his friend and neighbor, Pepe Hernandez, worked last year.

"Yes, Pepe Hernandez is here last year,

but this year he tell me he will go to Saginaw right away. He will not work in the onions. He say the pay this year—she is too cheap." One of the loitering men evidently had seen and talked to Pepe Hernandez lately.

"There is no work here for two week. It is rain all the days."

"You have the contract?" asked another. "How much it say he pay?"

This was something new to Tito. A contract? What kind of contract?

He learned from the men how the recruiters from the sugar beet companies contracted the laborers in Texas and signed them for work in different areas in Michigan. In the onion fields the small farmers counted on the surplus workers—the free-lancers, the volunteers. If the unsolicited labor supply was large, the wages were trimmed accordingly; if small, higher wages were maintained to keep the wandering workers in the area long enough to finish the necessary work.

"Last year, he is pay sixty-five cents the hour. This year—*quien sabe*—maybe he is pay only fifty cents. Next year, I theenk I do not come here. I go to the cherries and pickles, and then I go maybe to the cotton soon. I not stay in the onions." The man who was talking allowed the twig in his hand to drag sadly over the drying ground while he swayed his brownish arm listlessly.

**T**ITO was learning; he was learning quickly. It was not as bright as Pepe Hernandez painted the scene. These men had been sitting by for two weeks without work, waiting for the onion fields to dry—waiting so that they could be sent into those fields on their knees from dawn till after sunset at—*quien sabe?*—perhaps only fifty cents an hour.

**REV. THEODORE J. RADTKE** is Executive Secretary for the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking.

"How much you pay for the houses?" asked Tito.

"No, *señor*, we do not pay for the houses. But she is all full up. Many family is come and go. There is too many now for the work."

"María, these men are not work for these two week. They thenk, maybe, he is pay fifty cents the hour. It is the onions."

María was quiet on her side of the car with the baby in her lap. She had read Tito's face even before he spoke. She grasped the hopelessness written there. It was nothing new. Many a day in Crystal City Tito's face was the same; many a day on the road following the cotton harvest from Rosenberg to Lubbock to Roswell, even once into Arizona, back to Crystal City, down into the Rio Grande Valley, back to Crystal City again, Tito's face was the same.

THERE were bright days when you came upon the cotton just in time, when they needed hundreds and thousands of hands at three dollars a hundred pounds to fill the long bags and dump them into the waiting trucks to be hauled off to the gins. Then, when even Arturo and Inez, yes, with his scant five years, even Tomás could help to fill the bags from the cotton stalks, plucking the soft fluffs from their hull nests, toughening their tender hands to the tasks of men three times their years, and darkening their faces still more every day under the relentless sun—those were the bright days.

"*Agua!* Water! Tomás, run now and get the water jug for your papa."

In the heavy cotton harvest at three dollars a hundred pounds, Tito and María and the children could earn enough for food; they had more—there was extra money for a movie on a Sunday afternoon. There was enough for gasoline and oil to the next cotton domain one hundred miles down the highway. But last year the growers tried and they succeeded in many places; they offered only two dollars and fifty cents for picking a hundred pounds. In one place there were so many wetbacks the price was down to two dollars. For two dollars a hundred pounds of cotton, Tito and María and the family did not eat fruit and ice cream and meat—but beans and *tortillas* for breakfast and for lunch and for supper.

You can live, you can stay alive, on *tortillas* and beans, but you have little energy for work. How do you rest and rejuvenate your tired body sleeping under a tree? The night is hot. The dust from the trucks in the fields all the day long still hangs in the moonlit air. What a glorious blessing and a miracle it is when the field leads off to a little stream! You can go down there after nine

o'clock when the work today is done and roll and splash in that delicious water; you can get the dust out of your hair and the sand off your back and the sweat, the streaming, grimy sweat, off your face, your arms, your legs.

One of the men to whom Tito had been talking came over to the car. He looked at the children, at María and the baby; he bade them good afternoon.

"*Señor*, this place—there is not much work. In the corners, only a little ways, is the *centro*. There is farmer there every day to look for us to work, when there is field to work. You go there. Maybe you find the work. I find him there."

At the center Tito found a row of blockhouses with a dozen one-room apartments. There was a water spigot outside every door. There were three and four families in every room. Last year the Farmers' Association had furnished lights and kerosene stoves. Many of the stoves were damaged with use; many a bulb was now only broken glass.

A car swung skidding through the trough of the ditch entering into the lane of the teeming apartment building. The driver wore a Roman collar and drove well into the milling mass of men, children, and dogs.

Six feet of shoulders and stringy blond

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► An argument is where two people are trying to get the last word first.  
—QUOTE

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hair borne easily by his two hundred well-distributed pounds qualified Father Charles Majovnik for the steel mills in Pittsburgh during his seminary days.

Neither Tito nor any of the others would attempt his last name. He was Padre Carlos to all his brown-eyed children. Did he not build them a church? Better—did they not build him a church only a mile from here last year? Some of them lived in the vicinity all winter, favorites of the farmers; they had their own houses—converted chicken coops—without rent on the farmers' land.

There were children on every finger and leg the moment he stepped out of the car. He was their padre. Did he not help them to celebrate the great feast of Guadalupe last December twelfth in the new church? Did he not get the Bishop to come to the new church and confirm them? Did he not try to find jobs for them? And last year, when Catalina García's baby was coming and she was very sick, did he not put her in his own car and drive "like sixty" to the hospital?

He even tried hard to say the prayers after Mass with them in his "Balkan Spanish"; that is what he called it. But Catalina García and all her friends never heard his mispronunciations, his

bad accent, his unintelligible words out of the Velasquez *Spanish-English Dictionary*. They heard only his heart.

Did he not write a letter to the priest in Texas for Lupe Zapata when she lost her baptismal certificate? Did he not find Father García and bring him "from very far away" to give a mission? The people came from seventy-five miles around to hear Father García give the mission. Then it was like heaven in the church to say the Rosary out loud and sing the hymns to the Dark Virgin.

"Oh, Mary, my Mother,

Oh, Comforter of mortal men;

Protect me, and guide me

To my Heavenly Father's home."

Two farmers came with a truck the next day to haul thirty men forty miles for work cleaning out a new field. At seven o'clock that evening Tito received three dollars for the day's work. The truck churned up a mud hole in the field as it roared under the load of humanity. It was nine o'clock when the men jumped stiffly down before the row of blockhouses. The night cold had already set in. María tucked the baby and two of the children to bed in the car.

"You and María can sleep on the floor in our house," José Álvarez offered. "Maybe the kids can go with Beto Rodríguez . . . Beto, *hombre!* Here are Tito's Arturo and Tomás . . ."

The children were scattered to the various apartments wherever floor space allowed. There is always room for one more; little fellows of seven and nine years can curl up into an amazingly small cocoon.

The baby cried weakly that night at eleven o'clock; by twelve he was very sick. His little eyes looked cold and white, and his little arms did not care to move. All the ladies of the twelve apartments offered their consoling words and medical skill. By morning he was fast losing his tiny hold on the sorry world of the cold camp life of Michigan that is frigid and biting at five, at six, and at seven o'clock in April.

"Where does the Father live?" Tito asked.

"It is twenty miles, *señor*."

ANGELITO was already baptized. But the Father would find the doctor.

The old Ford sputtered and died, sputtered and died again in the raw air that frosted Tito's breath. Rodríguez came to take Tito's place at the controls. Not even his delicate mechanical touch could bring the cold mechanical mule to noisy life this needy day.

"You take my truck," said Rodríguez generously.

Before Tito and María reached Father's house, little Angelito was a saint with God in Heaven.

(To be concluded next month)

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## PART TWO

# His Name is Gonzales

The migrant worker, gypsy of the labor market, spurns federal aid, and, like Tito, spends precious earnings in fruitless search for work

by THEODORE J. RADTKE

IN THE BEET fields there is more work. You can toil and sweat from dawn till past sunset when it does not rain. You can hoe many an acre of beets if you keep attacking the task day in and day out, even on Sundays. You are allotted your share of acres to tend; you have a "house" of your own because the farmer is a big *ranchero*. He has a contract with the beet company. The company will buy his one thousand acres of beets in the fall.

Farmers are interested in the yield per acre in beet country. They inspect the fields with shrewd eyes.

Tito Gonzales knew nothing about big business farming. He wanted a job, a good job, a steady job, and he wanted wages such as those Pepe Hernandez talked about.

Pepe Hernandez perhaps talked very much at home in Texas to his friends, but here in the beet fields he was wise enough to know how to keep his place. He would not register a complaint even when the water pump failed; instead he sent little Roberto half a mile every day to carry the water supply of two buckets from Manuel Romero. The pump at Manuel's humble "home" was still in good order. Roberto did not complain—what a heartening liberty to be free from that shackling hoe for this one hour in twelve!

"Wait, wait, until the *jefe* inspector

comes around and discovers the pump himself. It is better that way." Pepe Hernandez knew how to keep his place.

Two weeks had passed since Tito found Pepe twenty miles from Saginaw on the beet farm. Surely God and Our Lady of Guadalupe wanted Tito to work in the beets. On that very day Arcario Medina had been driven off the Miller farm. Why did he insist on complaining to the *jefe* all the time? Arcario could read and write; he could have learned to be *jefe* inspector some day. What if he could measure acres and count numbers and wages! What of it if the store prices—the company store where he and everybody bought on credit until payday on August first—were higher than downtown? He would have to travel in his car downtown, wouldn't he? That would cost him gasoline. Perhaps Arcario went to school and learned A, B, C's and numbers—but of earthy wisdom he learned nothing.

Pepe Hernandez instructed Tito care-

fully on these matters when he helped him secure the forty acres which had been allotted to Arcario.

"María, we have the house; we have the water; we have the forty a-cres!"

"How much did the hoe cost, Tito?"

"The beans, they cost much money here," said Tito. "They do not have the chilies in the store. Can you make the *tortillas* from this flour?"

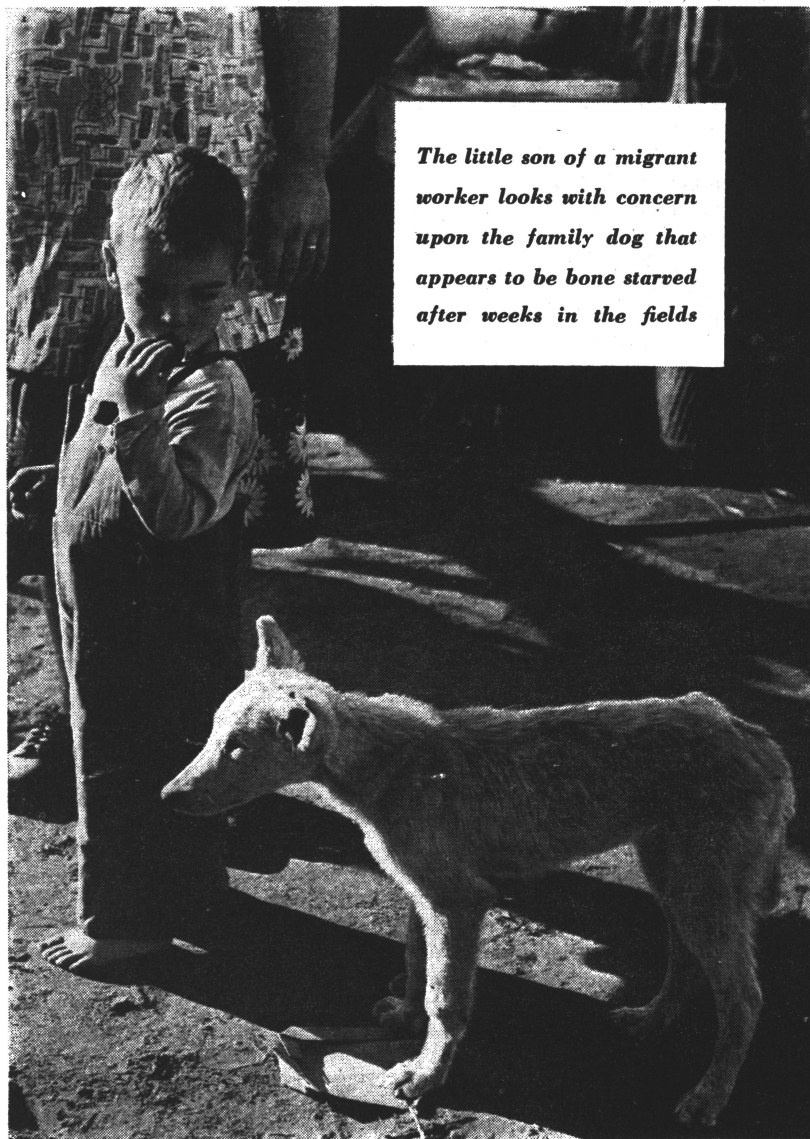
"How much did the hoe cost, Tito?"

"It is maybe three *dolar*, maybe four *dolar*—*quien sabe?*" Tito was evasive. "Tomorrow I will get hoe for you and for Inez and for Arturo. Tomás—he is not good yet with the hoe."

"We will let Tomás to watch his twin and Lucia," suggested María. "We must all work to keep the forty a-cres well."

A contract agreement is a happy security, a heavy responsibility.

The two-burner kerosene stove came to blue-flaming life. The coffee boiled away in a pan; beans boiled merrily in another. But no one can make *tortillas*.



*The little son of a migrant worker looks with concern upon the family dog that appears to be bone starved after weeks in the fields*

Photos courtesy of "Collier's"

on a two-burner kerosene stove. The soft white wheat bread in the wrappers is not to be relished by *tortilla* teeth. A man who works hard with a hoe must have good hard food to chew on, good brown beans and chili sauce. Beans and chili sauce rolled up neatly in a *tortilla* were the *burritos* that Tito loved.

\* \* \*

In June the cherries are to be picked in Traverse City. In July and August there is corn on the stalk, and pickles on the vines. These are closer to the Indiana-Ohio border. There are tomatoes and peaches and more corn on the stalk in Illinois. Whole segments of the city population run to Traverse City for the cherries—there is money in cherry picking for a week, perhaps two weeks. There are raspberries. Those who work fast with their hands for eight cents a lug can make fast money. It is the same in pickles, while they last.

"María, should we go to the cherries?"

"No, we will stay on the contract with the beets till August first payday."

**T**ITO had had no cash money in his hand for more than a month. There was not even twenty-five cents for a movie on a Sunday afternoon. Only at the store could he buy gasoline on credit, so that at least once in two weeks the family could go to church—the church where they spoke Spanish in Saginaw. They could spend the day seeing the unfamiliar sights of the wonderful city. It was restfully pleasant for tired muscles at the blue-green waterfront on a warm and sunny Sunday

afternoon. At least the children could play in the dashing surf in their clothes; it was almost like taking a bath.

Tito decided to speak to Pepe.

"Pepe, if I had five *dólares* I could go to the cantina sometime with you and we could drink some beers together . . . like Crystal City, you know, in the Burro Bar."

"But Tito, my friend, when do I get the money back?"

"Payday—on payday, with two *dólares* extra."

"Make it five dollars extra on payday—*esta bien?*"

Pepe knew how to coin money in haste. When the next fellow needs it, he needs it. That is the time to make the bargain. Turn five dollars into ten in three weeks.

Beer in the cantina was useful small talk in approaching Pepe. Tito, however, needed five dollars to buy a tire for his car. It was two miles to the store where he bought the family groceries. The automobile is no luxury even for the poorest of men in the beet fields.

\* \* \*

That week there was a great grapevine hub-bub through all the fields. There was going to be a show, a movie, a free movie on Wednesday night. Someone had been by in a station wagon with leaflets; there would be toys and candy for the children. Some man by the name of Reverendo Alfonso Allen was to give a lecture.

Those who could not read smiled in gleeful anticipation as they listened to their friends telling what the little pa-

pers announced. Among the blind the man with one eye is a king.

"María, we must go. The children do not see a show in so long."

Eight thousand Texans were working the fields of that treasured valley. They were scattered over sixty by thirty miles of rich loam bottom-land. They gathered in fiesta fashion from all parts on Wednesday evening. At least two hundred were there. They listened politely quiet to the long lecture before the movie. Tito and María sat on the grass, the children anxious but subdued. Little by little a strange feeling began to creep through their inmost souls.

"Tito, this *reverendo* must not be a Catholic; he is not talking of the Virgin Mary with holy words."

"Yes, María. Let us go home. We will say our prayers to the Virgin Mary. It is wrong for this *reverendo* to talk against her. Do you think maybe all our people here are Protestantes already?"

"I think maybe so. They should not stay. They should go away."

It was heartening to priests in many places to see a people living their Catholic faith in their "homes" and under the trees surrounding the beet fields at the horizon.

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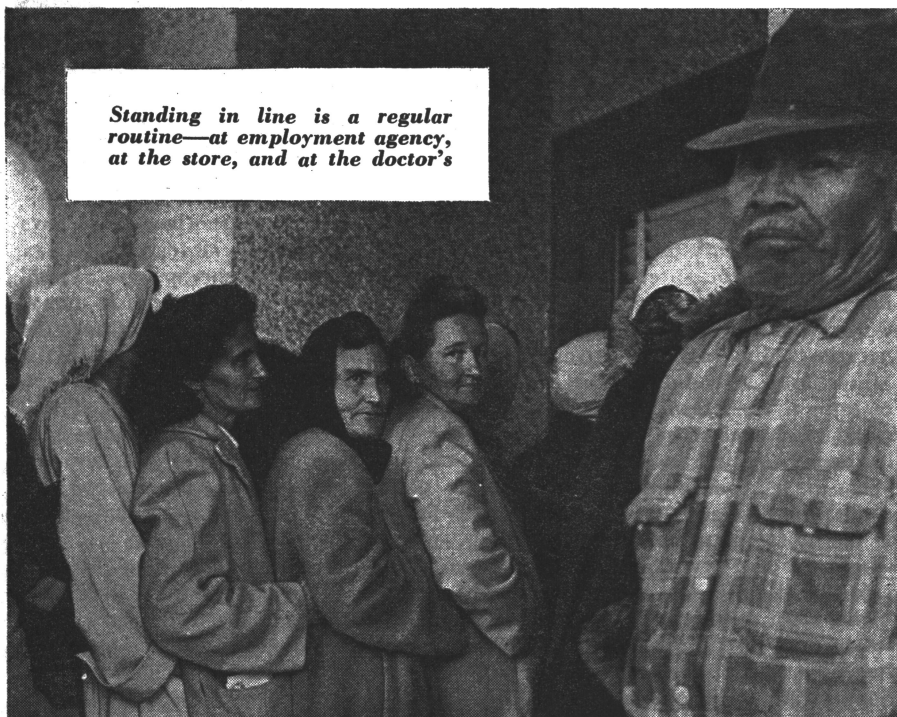
The very next day a car stopped at the edge of their field. The trailing dust cloud caught up with the driver, then the breeze wafted it up and away. A figure in a Roman collar was seen stepping out, then through the ditch, then across the field, his shoes kicking an earth-clod now and again with a puff of dust. It was Father Schmidt from the church downtown. He came to visit and tell them that next Sunday afternoon the parish wanted them as guests for a free Mexican supper. In the evening there would be a movie in the parish hall.

**T**HE feast of St. Ann, mother of the Blessed Virgin, patroness of the parish, called for a celebration.

"Oh, *si señor*," Father Schmidt chuckled as he answered Tito's question. There would be *enchiladas* and *tales*, *empanadas de manzanas*, *frijoles*, and *tacos*, even some *chalupas*.

Father Schmidt did not explain, however, that upon his request the Altar Society had given him the free dinner tickets for his parishioners out in the fields.

Father Schmidt was not one to tell of his deeds. St. Ann's, however, could boast of a rummage store, and a maternity home, and a clinic. St. Ann's was a parish in which the Texans had come to settle years ago, speaking Spanish along the railroad track on that side of town which even in Michigan



Standing in line is a regular routine—at employment agency, at the store, and at the doctor's

is called the *colonia*, the "Mexican section."

Because Father Schmidt gave his heart to a people whom he wanted to understand and serve, a flourishing parish came to adopt the Catholic customs of the sons and daughters of Guadalupe who settled there.

In the Saginaw fields where Tito worked, seminarians spent six weeks of their summer vacation visiting the people, learning Spanish, teaching Catechism, preparing First Communion classes, organizing recreation, and operating the 16 mm. movie projector in the parish halls of the towns nearby.

\* \* \*

The first of August was a beautiful day. It was raining; the roads were muddy. Who can bother about the rain or the puddles or the mud? This is a beautiful day. It is payday. The work in the beets is done. Everybody must go to town and celebrate.

Money, cold, cash money. The majority of the workers would be unfamiliar with a check. Give them cold, hard money. Even paper money is all right. Paper money can buy shoes, and dresses, and a suit of clothes, a generator for the car and an extra tire, a hat and a tie and a shirt; paper money will let you into the movie, into the cantina, into the liquor store. You can swagger into a shop to look over the colorful neckties for two dollars; you can take your time to pick just the one of red and white and green like the Mexican flag.

**T**ITO received \$110. He earned \$660. There was his food bill, clothing, tools, medicine, pots and pans, stove rent, house rent, water and electricity, gas and oil bill to pay. All this was taken

out first. It was marked against him at the company store.

Tito did not understand the accounts. He did not even know how much he received for tending an acre. One hundred and ten dollars was a terrible wad of money to receive all at once. That meant he had lived for more than four months and had earned extra money besides. He felt like a king. They told him something about a bonus—he could collect a bonus if he would return in September to work in harvesting the beets. By September he wanted to be in Texas in the cotton.

That evening he saw Pepe Hernandez. He paid the ten dollars.

"How much money you get, Pepe?"  
"Maybe \$300, maybe \$400—*quien sabe?*"

Tito was grateful to Pepe for securing him work in the beets. But he felt he should not trust him. One hundred and ten dollars would not buy a "new" car.

"Tomorrow, Tito, we will go to the cantina and drink one hundred beers together."

It reminded Tito of his father, Macedonio. Always a "hundred beers." Tito and Maria needed their money for more important things.

"No, Pepe, you go to the cantina, maybe, but I will go to the church and thank the Virgin Mary for the good work in the beets."

Tito did not know how great solicitude his Mother had for him.

The news came over the radio-fast grapevine the following evening. Pepe Hernandez did not drink beers; he drank from a liquor bottle straight. His head became hot and his voice got loud in the cantina. There was a good fight and Pepe's face was slashed. Pepe also had his arm broken when his friends—those

good cantina friends—threw him out the back door down the stairs.

"You, Mexicans, with your lingo," shouted the man behind the bar, "bring me just one more like that and I'll never let you inside this place—not even on paydays!"

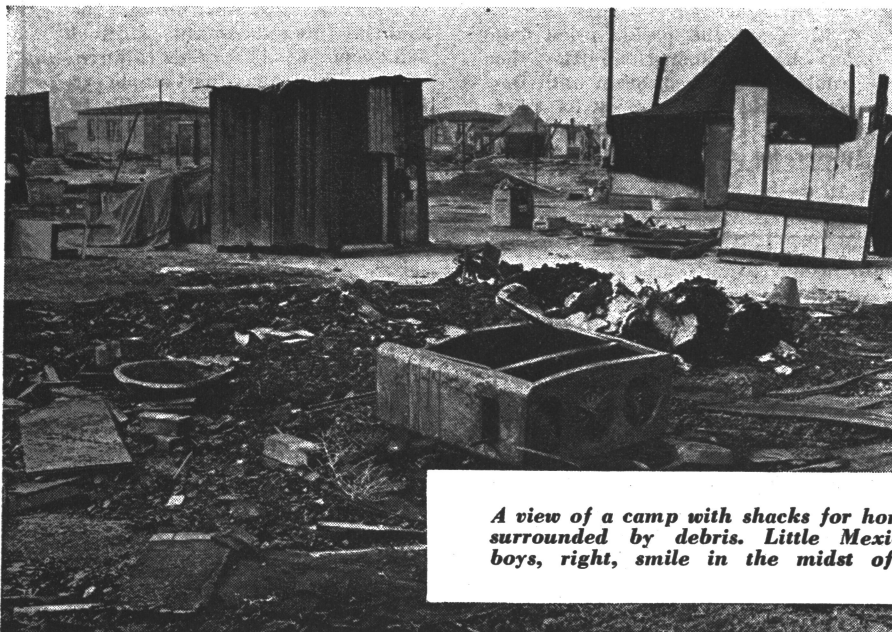
The poor, ignorant man behind the bar! Did he not know that loud voices and a fight are only loud voices and a fight—this is a day to celebrate, payday. Tomorrow there is only toil and sweat. For one Pepe there are thousands who live quietly within the law.

A cantina only two blocks down the street already had a sign in the window, "No Mexicans." Overheard after the fight, coming from a man who sat on the corner stool, was, "Yeah, Tony, the police ought to clean 'em out of town. The work's done, ain't it? Ain't they been paid? Sure. Now let 'em clear outa here and get back home to Texas where they come from!"

They took Pepe that night to the clinic at St. Ann's Church. The Sister in charge called and found a doctor who would tend to his injuries. Sister Paula at the clinic seemed to understand, as if cut faces and broken arms were the daily routine even on Sunday evenings.

Pepe was sobering a little; at least he was respectful before Sister. She took a Sacred Heart badge and pinned it to his shirt before he left for the doctor's office. How did she know? Did she really know that Pepe's mother had given him into the keeping of the Sacred Heart many years ago? There was a Sacred Heart badge in Pepe's battered wallet. He had not kissed it for many a long and prayerless day.

Tomorrow he would—yes, after a long restful sleep, he would kiss the badge. The trail back to the Church and the



*A view of a camp with shacks for homes surrounded by debris. Little Mexican boys, right, smile in the midst of it*





Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart had actually begun. God bless Sister Paula!

Gonzales gathered up the things of the household in less than one hour. They were tied here and there about the *charanga*—the jalopy—on his top and over his fenders and along his running board. Tito had already installed the new generator; the self-starter worked again. The children danced in smiling excitement. Tomorrow they would see the new shining cars on the road again, new rivers, new trees, new cities, new bridges—tomorrow all the world will enter their eager eyes and ears. Tomorrow there will be no beets and no hoe. For little ones tomorrow is always a wonderful adventure.

"We will go first to the Indiana country for the tomatoes," Tito announced to Maria. "They are tell me it is now time for the tomatoes and pickles. It is only maybe one hundred mile."

No one could explain who "they" were. The Employment Service could have told Tito far in advance there were no tomatoes this year in northern Indiana. The canneries were overstocked from the harvest of last year. Not an acre of tomatoes had been ordered up from the farmers. There were beans. But there was no work in the beans now. It was last year "they" found such good work in the tomatoes in Indiana.

The Employment Service would have told Tito to move into the berry harvest for a week or two, then come back for the beet harvest and his bonus. One hundred miles covered the round trip.

**B**UT Tito and "they" seemed never to have heard of the U. S. Employment Farm Placement Service. Even if he did, did it not have to do with the government? That is tantamount to going to the police! There were signs, big signs, along every highway calling out: Stop. Farm Workers Wanted. That town had an agent of the Employment Service to help "them" and Tito and all similar free-lance wandering workers. They were needed to bring in the crops. But for every one that stopped and learned where work was definitely available, there were ten who went by what "they" said.

Tito and Maria and five hundred others came into the camp twenty miles north of Huntington, Indiana, that week. There was work for none.

Traveling is expensive when there are seven mouths to feed. It is worse when there is no work for two weeks. One hundred dollars will not keep the family for long. And in August there is a rich cotton harvest in Texas.

Tito knew the land and the cotton in Texas. He knew the ranchers in many places, and they knew him and his

## The Church and the Migrant Worker

**I**N Detroit, not too far away, the "old Irish" section took on a Mexican character because many a migrant worker had found it advantageous to live in the North near the factories and shops where men worked all the year round. In the old parish church the Brown Virgin replaced St. Patrick and the brogue gave way to a "Mexican" accent.

In Crookston, Minnesota, the Cathedral parish school made itself over for the summer months to accommodate the migrant children who otherwise never attended school. The Sisters taught them, housed them, and fed them for a week at a time; then the buses and cars distributed them over the landscape to their mothers and fathers for the weekend.

Near Auburn, North Dakota, two priests lived in a trailer out in the beet fields during the summer. Catechism and instruction started only after nine o'clock. No one is in from the fields before that hour. Sunday Mass may be said in the rural school-house this Sunday, under a tree next Sunday, and in the living room of the ranch house the following Sunday. During the week the priests covered the beet front for hundreds of miles.

In Kansas, when the girl at the box office told the priest the Mexicans were not allowed in that theater, he said, "Well, we're going in anyway. Do you want our money, or don't you?" In they went; there was no trouble. The priest was treating his altar boys. Their brownish faces grinning and their white teeth gleaming told the priest what a hero he was.

"Father, you make us to be proud we are Americans!"

In Texas the parish priest lost half his parishioners in May; he would not see them again until December. He was one priest for three thousand, for four thousand—in places, for eight thousand—Catholic

souls. He was glad to have time enough to baptize the babies; he had sixteen Baptisms each week. He was glad enough being able to conduct classes for three hundred children for First Communion, say three Masses in three different towns each Sunday, and answer the sick calls, while he instructed those to be married and repaired the parish properties with hammer and saw and the assistance of the men. They naturally preferred to discuss each project with solemn views. There will be work like this even for the next generation. Some other generation shall have to build the parochial school.

In San Juan, Texas, the parish priest taught his people by radio every day for fifteen minutes in Spanish. On the ranches serious faces listened to him hundreds of miles away. Another priest wrote a weekly editorial column which the people could read in their own southwestern Spanish along with the news of the hydrogen bomb. Twenty-five diocesan and city newspapers printed his column.

Over the southwestern United States the Bishops formed the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking. Parish halls, clinics, catechetical centers, recreational centers were coming into being; the American Board of Catholic Missions was making it possible for the Bishops in the Southwest to give the Spanish-speaking people a Catholic advantage otherwise impossible.

Since 1945 the Church has maintained a Regional Office in the Southwest for a continuing study, survey, exploration, and experiment over the problem of the meeting of two Catholic cultures; in the Southwest the American Catholic culture meets the Mexican Catholic culture. The Church's interest is the spiritual and temporal welfare of her children. Three million American Catholics of Mexican descent are one-tenth of the Catholic population of the United States.

family from year to year. He could find employment in the cotton now if he were in Texas.

"Tomorrow, Maria, we go home to Texas and we stay. Maybe next year we get the contract in Texas first; then we come again. But we come only for the *betabeles*. We make only one hundred *dólares* this year; maybe next year we make three hundred, maybe, like Pepe Hernandez."

Maria had her Rosary beads entwined in her fingers, her hands lying in her lap, as she sat quietly on the other side of the seat of the rickety old car. Not long ago, five months ago, a little baby had reclined there.

"Yes, Tito, we will come back. We must come back to visit the grave of our Angelito."

It was a warm evening. They slept on the soft grass that night.

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