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**SAN ANTONIO AND I: CONFESSIONS OF A  
PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER**

by

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**All views, interpretations, recommendations and conclusions expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supporting or cooperating organizations.**

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Introduction

In this paper I shall relate some of my experiences while serving with the Peace Corps in a Colombian village. The first part gives a brief description of some aspects of the village and its most influential family.

As a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, I worked for two years in an "Integrated Program of Applied Nutrition," known as NUTRA.<sup>1</sup> My job was to introduce family gardening to the little village of San Antonio. This is a story about that village--and about me--and about how we changed each other.

The Village

San Antonio lies just off the Pan American Highway, 15 kilometers north of Ciudad Andina, Colombia. The village boundaries are not clearly defined, but about 1,000 people call themselves

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<sup>1</sup>A pseudonym, as are family and other place names.

"Antonlanos."<sup>2</sup> There are three public buildings in this 300-year-old village of coffee growers--a church where masses are held whenever a priest comes out from Ciudad Andina, and which also houses a girls' school, a boys' school recently built by the National Federation of Coffee Growers, and an Alliance for Progress health center which is visited by a doctor about twice a month. There are also five tiendas,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The "old timers" who know the local history (e.g., Don Eusebio) tell me that historically San Antonio was an old resguardo which was to encompass 500 hectares. However, its boundaries were never completely surveyed and today the village area is estimated at about 375 hectares. The village is surrounded by four large haciendas or latifundios of about 500 hectares each. The smallest and least utilized is owned by the church which allows the villagers (including yours truly) to pasture any animals they might have there along with the church's criollo cattle. In exchange, the village holds several communal work days per year to mend the fences, cut down the tall ferns as well as small trees from the steepest hillsides--a practice which nicely aids the erosion process (but there's no convincing them to do otherwise--I know, I tried). Slightly more utilized is the farm of a high official in the police force of Bogotá. The villagers can only recollect his visiting the farm once, but his maiden sister--a "rough and ready" type--lives there most of the time along with two policemen who look after the cattle (all of which are conveniently sold to the police battalion in Ciudad Andina) and harvest the coffee. Of the other farms, one is a relatively well developed dairy farm and the other is the largest farm in Colombia which is completely specialized in sisal growing.

<sup>3</sup>This number fluctuates quite a bit. Depending upon a family's fortunes in the market they may buy a case of soda or beer, a carton of cigarettes, or candles, etc., in Ciudad Andina on the market days (Monday and Friday) to later re-sell in San Antonio. Since everyone travels in and out on the same market bus (a converted 1947 International truck), everyone knows if a new tienda will be functioning during the next week and what goods will be available. There are, however, the five tiendas which are more or less permanent features in the village.

The small amount of working capital of these stores was demonstrated to me when, in order to get one to stock Coca-Cola, I had to buy the first case of it for them (at the wholesale price). Then I had to re-buy it by the bottle at retail price, after which they reimbursed me for my initial outlay. Coke did "catch on" in San Antonio, and three of the tiendas later carried it on a full time basis.

small stores (usually a corner of one room in the owner's house) which sell soda, beer, cigarettes, and a few staples.

About half the people live in a "line village" with homes on one to three-acre plots facing the only road. The houses are adobe with thatched roofs. Only six families have cement floors, including the two school teachers who live in their schools. There is no electricity or running water, but each family does have its own well. These are often located quite near the neighboring family's latrine, i.e., each is located on the edge of the family plot, but that does not matter much because hardly anyone uses the latrines.<sup>4</sup> These privies are a legacy of an earlier "public health campaign" which took place with great fanfare when the cafeteros (large coffee growers) gave the prefabricated units to the village apparently without checking to see whether anyone wanted them. It is a good example of an innovation imposed upon the people with no participation on their part.

#### The Martínez Family

To know San Antonio, it is necessary to know the Martínez family, starting with the 62-year-old grandmother--Misla<sup>5</sup> Purificación Martínez. She exercises profound influence on the village

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<sup>4</sup> Although I never asked the reason for their non-use, the following appears to me to be the best possible explanation: After a 300 year history of "squatting" in the more or less open fields, to sit over a hole in a seat in an enclosed and smelly outhouse is a very radical change indeed.

<sup>5</sup> "Misla" is the title used by the campesinos of the village for married women. Its better known counterparts are the titles of "Señora" or "Doña."

through a pattern of kinship relations. Her husband, Don Eusebio, is retired after 40 years with the coffee federation and lives in the family's "apartment" in Ciudad Andina. The "apartment" is two rooms in a courtyard of the old San Francisco church in Ciudad Andina. There he is employed as a part-time janitor "bell ringer." Through his influence the villagers are able to obtain some production credit from the federation. This alone is reason enough for them to maintain good relations with Misla Pura.

The eldest son of Misla Pura lives in San Antonio and is one of its largest coffee farmers. As such, Don Carlos employs a full-time laborer and hires more help during the harvest season. He is indistinguishable in everyday dress from the poor people of San Antonio, except that he wears shoes or sandals while most people wear them only on fiesta days. He is on most of the village boards, but has never held the top official position of president or chairman.

Materially, he and the family are relatively well off. Don Carlos owns one of the three horses in the village and supplies draft as well as human power for "village work days." He owns the only three cows in the area and occasionally sells milk to other Antonianos if there is a surplus above family needs. Also, a rather accomplished tailor, he makes mens' suits in the off season on his old Singer sewing machine, one of three such machines in the village. Although the Martinez family is relatively well off compared to other villagers, by urban Colombian standards they are definitely in the poorer class. Their house is comparable to those in the lower class barrios surrounding Ciudad Andina.

Don Carlos' house is a central meeting place for the village for several reasons. First, it is also the residence of Misia Pura. Second, he has the best stocked tienda in town with the biggest selection of goods (excluding beer, which is not sold because of Misia Pura's more puritanical attitudes). The Martfnez kitchen usually has a big pot of stew simmering on the fire and anyone who is "down and out" can come in for a free meal. No one begs for this, however; instead Misia Pura, who knows everyone's business, often almost literally drags someone into the kitchen for a bowl of filling, if not too nourishing, soup.

Don Carlos' wife, Misia Blanca, is the village nurse and works for the public health service. She visits several other villages with the doctors. Since she has access to the town's only typewriter, which is kept locked up in the health center, she also carries on most of the village's written correspondence.

The youngest of Misia Pura's four sons also lives in San Antonio and serves as the boys' school teacher. Jorge has 12 years of education, speaks a little English and is always addressed as "Professor." Although he does not participate physically in any community projects (i.e., work with his hands) he is an important opinion leader and legitimizer for such projects. He is always consulted by the village boards concerning any communication with the official agencies in Ciudad Andina. A good musician, he plays professionally in musical groups in the city on weekends, is the second violinist in the Conservatory of Music in Ciudad Andina, and is in great demand for village

fiestas. The more "cosmopolite" orientation of the Professor is evident in his frequent conversations about getting a job in a bigger town; he is rather discontented with the bucolic setting of San Antonio.

The last member of the family who enhances Misia Pura's local status is the sister of Misia Blanca, Señorita Luz. She runs the Martínez tienda and thus exercises some control over consumer credit. She also buys locally produced items and resells them in the city. Recently her status went up sharply: she married the administrator of the Hacienda San Antonio, an old historic plantation from which the village draws its name. Since the hacienda occasionally employs labor from the village, Misia Pura's position of influence was further secured.

Via this network of kinship relations Misia Pura is easily the most influential person in San Antonio. Although she does not attend the routine village meetings, the village leaders customarily gather in her kitchen before official meetings. It could be said that the working sessions of the committees meet there. The men ostensibly discuss the agenda while she serves them coffee and rolls (and once in a while even permits a little beer sipping). However, no one ever leaves that kitchen without knowing her opinion on the relevant issues. Not very amazingly, the community generally resolves the issues in accordance with her opinions.

I saw her influence at work moments after I arrived, quite unannounced, to begin my work in the village. The head of the local

NUTRA agency was scheduled to make the trip with me to explain my presence, etc., to the villagers. However, when this proved to be impossible his chauffeur simply drove me out to the village and left. The villagers soon clustered around, chattering away in rapid Spanish which I found almost completely unintelligible. Soon someone sent for Misia Pura; she arrived and immediately took charge. She decided that I would stay in one of the rooms of the health center, since it was financed by 'my people'--the Alliance for Progress. She sent several men off to find a bed, a chair and a table to furnish the room. Since there are no restaurants in the village she also decided that I would eat at the Martínez house as a paying <sup>a</sup>border. Thus I learned that this sparkling-eyed little old lady had quite a bit to say about what went on in San Antonio.

#### Beginnings of the NUTRA Program in San Antonio

That night there was a long torch light procession in San Antonio celebrating the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. When the procession ended on the church steps I was invited, without advance notice, to tell the community about Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy! (I arrived in Colombia the day of President Kennedy's funeral.) I learned that the village had sent a letter to Mrs. Kennedy expressing sympathy, and to it and to her they attributed my "speedy arrival." While I did not expressly say that my presence had nothing to do with Mrs. Kennedy, I did try to shift the emphasis over to the NUTRA Agency (into which

I had just been transferred a week before)<sup>6</sup>. I talked about children, infant mortality, vitamins, proteins and proper diet. I told them I was there to teach them vegetable gardening! Luckily my Spanish was so bad that few understood, and hopefully they were not insulted by my implications that they were not feeding their children in a proper manner and attributed any such impression to my strange syntax.

The early NUTRA Program was started with complete disregard for any principles of introducing innovation and change into a rural society. The program was not based upon any perceived needs of the villagers; it was imposed upon the village. The idea was born in an F.A.O. office in Rome. Gradually it trickled down through various technical agencies and governmental units. Somewhere along the line it picked me up and we just showed up together that afternoon in San Antonio. I am sure this village was chosen for its geographical location. Being located just off the paved Pan American Highway, officials, both foreign and Colombian, could visit it in one afternoon, "inspect" the home and school gardens, have their pictures taken, and hurry back to the city. The villagers had absolutely no part in planning the programs. They were completely ignorant of the program's aims and methods until that night when I told them that their children were undernourished and starving, and that I was going to remedy that by teaching them gardening and rabbit raising.

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<sup>6</sup> My Peace Corps training was concerned with how to organize cooperatives and credit unions (with the main audio-visual aid being a technicolor movie concerning how they operate in the Fiji Islands). However, upon my group's arrival in Colombia, coops and credit unions were no longer an "in" thing as far as the Peace Corps was concerned, so we were all declared to be agricultural extension agents and sent to work with NUTRA.

In addition, all tools, fertilizers, seeds and breeding stock initially came from outside the local area, and for the most part, from outside the country! The seeds, being transferred laterally from North America, sprouted and died; animals caught local diseases and infections and did poorly; the tools bent easily on the area's hard, compact soils and were unsuited to the culture of San Antonio--bare-foot people can't use spades designed to be prodded into the soil by well shod feet.

The initial attempt to introduce family gardening illustrates NUTRA's planning problems. The Agency first persuaded the church hierarchy in Ciudad Andina to donate a local two-acre plot for community gardens. Then it arranged for the government to send out a diesel tractor to turn over the soil. This huge tractor, the first to enter San Antonio (there was one gasoline engine in the village, part of a machine which stripped pulp from sisal leaves), arrived along with its plows and harrows right in the middle of the driest season of the year! Its driver did not know why the ground was to be plowed, nor did anyone in the village, nor did I. All these arrangements had been made without the slightest communication between the agency and the village. Several days later some agency officials arrived in San Antonio with the tools and seeds. I was then told to get the people to plant this area, which was far from any feasible source of water for irrigation.

Of course, since no Antoniano in his right mind would plant in that time of year, no one volunteered. It was only after I expressed my dismay to Misia Pura that seven families "decided" to try gardening.

These first gardeners were not in any sense "innovators." They were simply some of the poorest people of the village who owed Nisia Pura a favor. She "suggested" that they try gardening. I learned later that her reason was not to upgrade the diets of the families, but to give me something to do. Her concern may have been more about my contribution to the cash income of the Martínez family, as I was at first paying high prices for my meals, and she feared I might leave if I became too discouraged. It soon became very apparent that much was wrong with this initial attempt and the gardens were abandoned, much to the relief of this neophyte change agent and the seven families.

Two other factors were significant in accounting for the early lack of acceptance of the NUTRA Program in San Antonio. Both reflect directly upon the expertise of the change agents involved. One night during the first week Don Carlos and his wife came to pay a "social call." Their line of inquiry soon turned to my training and background in agriculture. By the end of the visit they were audibly wondering how a young foreigner, with no formal or informal training in farming or gardening was going to instruct the life-long farmers of San Antonio in vegetable gardening.

The second negative factor concerns NUTRA's bevy of home nutritionists. These were young middle class girls from Ciudad Andina who learned nutrition from on-the-job experience. Only the head nutritionist had studied in Bogotá. Their mission was to visit the villages and hold classes for the women on sewing, family hygiene, and baby

care?<sup>7</sup> Also, they were to teach how to prepare and cook the vegetables from the newly adopted family gardens.

In relation to the values and norms of San Antonio, these girls were almost as alien as I. Several incongruities which did not endear them to the villagers were easily noticeable. First, they spoke to the peasants in the familiar "tu" form, which in their context openly implied arrogance. The peasants of the region always use the formal "usted" form. Secondly, they literally roared into the village in UNICEF jeeps with horns blaring, setting dogs to barking, and sending children and chickens scurrying for their lives. Third, they wore crisp dresses, nylon stockings, high heels and cosmetics--in stark contrast to the poorly and plainly dressed peasant women. Fourth, they always brought out their own utensils--a sewing machine for the sewing classes, portable gas stoves, pots and pans for the cooking classes along with vegetables purchased in Ciudad Andina, many of which could not be grown in San Antonio. Consequently they prepared dishes which were quite unrelated to the peasants' diet and modes of cooking. Lastly, if rain appeared likely they didn't come; if it was sprinkling they wouldn't get out of the jeep.

Attendance soon declined sharply except for the cooking classes; at least at the cooking classes the women got to taste and sample some new foods after sitting through the afternoon. The girls soon became

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<sup>7</sup> A subject which they soon dropped since the mothers of San Antonio weren't about to listen to unmarried girls tell them how to care for babies.

aware of this, and did not announce the subject of the next class in advance. The village women were not to be fooled, however, and soon only a few women and children would meet the Jeep. If the class was on cooking, the children would run and spread the news to the rest of the village.

After consultation with the villagers I was able to "convince" the girls to make some changes. Thus, after I told the agency that unless the annoying and irrelevant practices ceased, the girls would no longer be welcomed in San Antonio, the chauffeurs did become less "matador-like" in their driving and the girls did change to cooking over fireplaces in the school kitchens using more typical utensils. Only on a few occasions, however, was I ever able to get the girls into a real campesina kitchen to prepare home grown vegetables. The one girl who would do this came from a rather poor urban family herself, and did use the respectful "usted" form with the villagers. She was the most popular and effective nutritionist.

On at least one occasion I must admit that I misjudged the girls' advocacy. It happened after one cooking class when I learned that the women were taught how to make an extremely rich cake which is served only on very special occasions. Part of the recipe calls for three dozen eggs, a luxury which no campesino family could afford. Although I scolded the girls for wasting their time teaching such frivolities, I soon found out, much to my chagrin, that it was probably the most successful class they ever taught. The cake is a status symbol and to buy one in Ciudad Andina represented a huge expenditure. Often the

poorer families band together to make the purchase; others go into debt. The girls showed them how to produce the same product in their own mud ovens at a considerable saving. The success was such that the girls were called upon by the people of neighboring villages to duplicate this demonstration. I quickly recognized my ignorance and apologized to the girls for my error.

#### Gardening as an Innovation

After the disastrous first attempts at gardening I retreated into a self-education program. On a small plot of ground behind the health center which could easily be watered for the remainder of the dry season, I tried seeds and fertilizers from every available source and kept careful records of their performance. By reading any literature on gardening that I could obtain, and by learning from the very people I was supposed to teach, I gradually gained some gardening skill.

By the time the spring planting season arrived in 1964, I was somewhat more confident of my position and knew the limits of my expertise. I had also learned to play upon my amateurism and to stress to the families that we were really experimenting to see what types of crops would grow there. Consequently we could rejoice together if the garden or plant varieties did well, and it really wasn't my fault if things didn't turn out as desired.

Although the spring growing season is shorter than that which begins in September, 11 families did agree to try gardening. All of the gardens were located near the homes and were carefully fenced in

to keep out the chickens and dogs. I allowed myself to be associated only with the five vegetables which had grown best in my experimental plot: swiss chard, lettuce, turnips, beets, and onions. Seed, fertilizers and insecticides were provided free to these first innovative families.

An interesting division of labor soon became noticeable. The men would dig up the ground, make the fences, and do the fertilizing and apply the insecticides. It became the work of the women and children to do the planting, weeding and transplanting. This pattern never varied in the remaining year and a half. A possible explanation is that the children were more often under my tutelage, as I worked several afternoons a week with them in the school gardens. Also, the norms of San Antonio may have prohibited men from performing certain tasks. The latter might be more significant as the men were probably more concerned with the cash crops of coffee and sisal, whereas the women and children were primarily responsible for the subsistence crops grown and consumed at home. When one family became very proficient at growing lettuce, it became another cash crop to sell in Ciudad Andina. Then the men of the extended family did participate in all phases of the lettuce growing.

Another division of labor appeared in the rabbit raising; here it was strictly a man's prerogative; he built the cages, fed and killed the animals and prepared the hides to be sold. On the other hand, chicken raising was strictly women's work, except if the family grew any fighting cocks, which were then the man's responsibility, and his pride.

These first 11 gardens did rather well, well enough that in the next planting season 23 families started gardens, with nine of the original 11 repeating. A few more varieties of vegetables were added as I continued my experimentations. In addition, I continually encouraged the families to "strike out on their own" and to try whatever might be their favorite vegetable, always stressing that this was still experimentation and no results could be guaranteed.

My last planting season in San Antonio was again the shorter and less reliable spring season and the number of gardens dropped to 20 (10 repeaters and 10 new families). Another reason for this decline may be that I now charged close to "market prices" for all of the supplies. As it turned out, the abstainers were the wiser; the spring rains came all at once and most of the gardens were washed away. Only a few families tried to re-start; most preferred to wait until September and the more "natural time" to plant.

Besides charging for my garden supplies, I had encouraged the families to try seeds from the various commercial seed dealers and to keep records on their performances. Eventually we had quite a list of brand names, prices, and dealers to choose from in Popayan. Several families also tried compost heaps, but with the scarcity of livestock in San Antonio this didn't work very well. In all, 43 families tried gardening during my stay in San Antonio.

#### The Martínez as Change Intermediaries

Studies have often noted that change agents associate with and have more communication with the higher classes among their client

audience. Though all of the Antonianos would be classified as poor, even by Colombian standards, this was true in my case as well. As I look back upon my friendship with the Martínez family I know that many families first came to them to inquire about the advisability of growing gardens. The Martínez family served as an important source of information in the "interest" and "evaluation" stages of the adoption process.<sup>8</sup> In several cases among the more destitute people, they explicitly stated that Misia Pura or Don Carlos had told them to come to me for garden supplies and help.

As time passed I began to feel accepted by the people. Although I always wore shoes, my clothes became quite tattered from the frequent poundings they got at the hands of the village washer women, and my dress was only slightly distinguishable from the natives. In my old slouch hat and ruana, in the shadows of the evening meetings, I could pass as an Antoniano, except, of course, for my gringo accent. I was welcomed in all the homes, whether I came to help them on a project, in their fields, or just on an impromptu social call. I attended weddings, fiestas and wakes, not as a very special guest, but just as a member of the village.

There is one more circumstance which deserves mention. The Martínez family never started a new garden nor attempted to improve upon the one they had when I arrived.<sup>9</sup> As I look back, it was almost

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<sup>8</sup>See E. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations, New York: Macmillan, 1964.

<sup>9</sup>\*\*Although upon my arrival in the village there were a few families which had "gardens," they only grew a few bushes of "ají" and "cilantro," two hot spices which the campesinos use to give some flavor to the everyday starchy soup of potatoes, yucca and plátano. The Martínez family, however, did grow a few heads of lettuce and cabbage.

as if they remained aloof from this part of my activities. The fact that they had close and frequent contacts in Ciudad Andina, and could bring out vegetables from there may be an explanation. Since they were much more modern and efficient coffee farmers than the average in San Antonio and were quite busy operating their coffee business, the economics of relative advantage could help explain their behavior.

I became a very good friend of the Martínez family, and was soon accepted at all of the family fiestas, gatherings and picnics. I often stayed in the family apartment in Ciudad Andina and on several occasions was scolded by Misia Pura if one of her sons and I imbibed too much at a fiesta. There is one indication, however, that I never became a real part of the family. Although I ate my meals at the Martínez home, I always ate alone at a formal setting on the patio. My meals were served to me, while the family ate informally in the kitchen, a structure separated from the house. Once I took my plate of food down to the kitchen to eat with them, but I could tell by the strained conversation that I should really not be there during the dinner hour. Eventually I was able to drink my after-dinner coffee in the kitchen with them, but I remained a near formal guest in their home at meal time.

## SAN ANTONIO REVISITED: THE RETURN OF THE GRINGO

Almost three years to the day of my departure I again popped into San Antonio, and again quite unannounced. Upon first glance, there have been three major physical changes in the village. First, there is now a new public building--or at least about three-quarters of it. The now raw brick structure when completed will proudly constitute San Antonio's "puesto de policia," a combined jail and police station. All that it needs <sup>now</sup> yet are the windows, doors, floors and a finishing over the brick walls. <sup>Since it is</sup> As a jail the villagers feel that the windows and doors, at least on the cells, must be of iron. Since these items entail a considerable cost, and since the village has financed all of the costs so far (and donated their labor) it is their general consensus that the government should pay for these parts of the building.

The government, however, is looking beyond the immediate outlay for the windows, etc., towards the then necessity of stationing (and paying) some policemen to man "this outpost." In all, it really can't see the urgency, or the need for uniformed representatives of law and order in this rather idyllic setting. During my two years of residency there was only one unfortunate event which called for the presence of two policemen in the village for a period of 40 days. In fact, <sup>I have found</sup> upon questioning <sup>that</sup> there really isn't any <sup>sense</sup> consensus of urgency among the people as to ~~why San Antonio really needs~~ <sup>the</sup> any policemen in the first place. The main reasons given surround the vague concepts that it would help put the village "on the map," or in some manner would be an

indicator of the 'modernity and progressiveness' of the village. The Martínez family's enthusiasm for the project may be explained by the fact that the future policemen will have to eat somewhere, and conveniently, kitchen facilities were not built into the structure.

During my three years of absence the village church has also fallen into the constructive hands of the village community action group. The top of the front wall was precariously leaning forward about three feet from its base. During my Peace Corps days there, there was quite a bit of talk about doing something about it: in fact, the church had already donated a huge pile of bricks with which the people were supposed to do "that something." Somehow or other we just never got around to that project--a fact which I could interpret several ways: Either I kept them too busy with their gardening, etc., projects or else they preferred to wait until the meddlesome gringo left and they could do it their own way. In my absence, however, the villagers not only tore down the old front wall, but moved it "out" another three meters to elongate the church sanctuary, they recemented the church floor and constructed a new set of pews to fill up the added space.

After a few rounds of sociable drinks the men will tell you that everyone is very, very pleased with their picturesque renovated church: the priest because now everyone can attend the services; the women because now they can all sit and kneel in the pews--rather than some having to utilize the aisle as before; and the men because they can continue their custom of standing in the rear during the services, but

now farther away from the padre! This latter "punch line" was always accompanied by a loud round of "guffaws" from the men as we sat around visiting in front of the tiendas during my revisit.

The last major physical change concerns the Martínez home. The intervening years must have been "good ones" for the Martínez household, because their brick house now boasts 12 rooms--all with cement floors and glass windows, no less, plus a built-on kitchen. Before it was five rooms with cemented floors but no glass windows and the kitchen was a separate structure in conformity with traditional village construction patterns. Earlier it was just about "the best house" in the village, but with its recent amplification it now certainly sets the Martínez family in a class by themselves vis-a-vis the rest of the village.

Their tienda has grown also. Not only does it occupy the largest front room of the house, but also it has vastly increased the variety as well as quantity of goods offered for sale. In fact, it has probably moved out of the "tienda" class and should be classified as a full-fledged food store. The most radical addition to the line of goods now includes the open sale of beer, although you still can't drink it there as permitted in front of the other village tiendas.

Professor Jorge's discontentment with the bucolic life in San Antonio has manifested itself in his recent departure. He now lives and teaches in Ciudad Andina. He is quite happy with his small house which has electricity and running water in one of the public housing projects of the city's outskirts.

The now "Misia" Luz continues to live at the Martínez household and run the store, along with her husband, Don Malacón. It turns out that he is not the administrator of the old Hacienda San Antonio as claimed in the Martínez letters to me. Rather, he is one of the policemen who works on the Bogotá police official's farm which borders the village. Well, I suspect we all have a slight tendency to exaggerate a bit about our relatives, especially if there is almost no chance of anyone ever coming around to check up on the facts. Unfortunately, I did return, but, of course, I never broached the subject of prior claims.

Besides the Martínez, the village has enjoyed a general prosperity as well. This can best be judged by the increased number of new tile<sup>10</sup> and "eternit"<sup>11</sup> roofs in the village as opposed to thatched<sup>grass</sup> roofs. In addition, a number of houses are sprouting new additions. Several new houses are up along the road which also reflects some prosperity, especially as the married sons garner enough income to move into a place of their own. Also, a number of families have now put up cement crowns around and wooden covers over their wells to keep the "rain water run off" and occasionally small animals from being washed directly into their wells.

Innovation-wise, there appear to be a few remnants of my exercising the art of being a "change agent." Although I revisited San Antonio in the "off season," there were definite signs near a dozen-plus

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<sup>10</sup>This can be seen since it takes a number of years for the tile to lose its bright red "newness," i.e.--fade.

<sup>11</sup>A cement-like sheeting material.

homes which indicated recent vegetable gardens. This is over a dozen more than were there when I first arrived five years ago. Rabbits never did "catch on" very well, and today have all disappeared from the village. The few still remaining rabbit hutches are now used as storage shelves for various and sundry items.

The NUTRA girls no longer visit San Antonio--and are hardly missed. But unfortunately, with the cessation of the NUTRA Program in San Antonio, CARE no longer delivers surplus foods for the school restaurants and so they too have closed down. About the only physical remains of this phase of the NUTRA Program are a few people running around wearing shirts on which can be faintly seen the outline of the Alliance for Progress handclasp and emblem; or the words boldly stating "USA Surplus Wheat, Not to be Sold," in Spanish, French and English.

There are other signs of innovativeness in the village which concern the cash crops of sisal and coffee. As such they will probably be of greater economic significance and longer lasting in their impacts. The planting of sisal has received a great impetus because just about a year ago a sisal processing factory opened up in Ciudad Andina. The campesinos of the region are thus assured a market at a steady and higher price, whereas before they were at the mercy of the middlemen who had to transport it to Medellín for processing into bags, rope, etc.

As a result of the "sisal boom" San Antonio has leaped into the "cottage industry" stage of "the industrialization process." A newly arrived entrepreneurial family has set up a small shop alongside their house which utilizes the poorer grades of the locally produced crop.

The father of the family used to work in a sisal processing and weaving factory. In San Antonio he has simply, and crudely, reproduced facsimiles of the machines which previously surrounded him, using whatever bits and pieces of wood, metal, leather and iron were available. Thus the "factory" has seven completely hand made machines all powered by leg work: four spinning wheels to make the thread, two "spooling" machines, and a "Rube Goldberg-like" loom which produces a loosely woven fabric used for potato sacks, etc. When all seven machines are in operation with the wheels "a-spinning," the drive belts "a-slipping" and "a-slapping," the gears "a-wobbling" and "a-grinding," the shuttles "a-shuttling," and tufts of sisal flying about in the air, it really is a most fantastic sight to behold. Except for its open air tropical setting under a thatched roof, I'm sure that Oliver Twist, or some such character from the early 18th century would feel quite at home there.

A "new" variety of coffee--caturra--is just starting to catch on in San Antonio, even though it was publicized by the coffee federation during my years of residency there. Its chief advantages are that: it begins to give high yields after only two years of being planted--if heavily fertilized several times per year, it does not need shading, therefore eliminating a need for planting plátano and other trees among it, and it does not grow very tall--thus eliminating the need for and risk of climbing ladders to harvest the coffee (two people are presently laid up in San Antonio as a result of falling out of their coffee trees). This new variety has been partially

adopted by five farmers of San Antonio. However, it is not the younger farmers who are adopting the new coffee variety for several reasons. To adopt it one must be very certain that it will grow on his own soil. To cut down a "sure thing" (i.e., the old, tall trees-- "Café Arabica") to plant something which "just might not" yield as well, is a very risky venture for people who are not too much above the minimum level of subsistence. Besides, they ask, "what do I do during the two intervening years when my income has decreased by the amount of coffee not sold and my costs have risen drastically because of the needed fertilizer?" (which in itself is a rare practice as far as the village is concerned). Also the plátano trees perform the vital function of providing the every, but everyday staple of plátano; thus additional expenses would be incurred as the family would then have to purchase it.

Consequently, those few who are trying the new variety and do appear pleased with it (although complaining about the high costs of fertilizer) are among the 'well-to-do' of San Antonio. Don Carlos, for example, is one of these, although he has not risked cutting down any of his old trees. He prefers to plant or experiment with caturra coffee on a small plot which he previously seeded to corn.

All in San Antonio have not prospered during the years; to the only Liberal Party member in the village a particularly unfortunate set of circumstances has occurred. During my years of residence, he was one of the most well-to-do campesinos there--highly respected in spite of his "strange political bent." A hard worker and a "saver," "modern" in his agricultural practices, Don Ruben came as close as any to reflecting whatever "protestant ethic" existed in San Antonio.

In fact, by remaining modest in physical adornments, he managed to save up enough money-plus by mortgaging his farm to the hilt--to make a cash purchase of a small school-type bus of the 1951 Ford vintage. Although not gloating, he wore a grin from ear to ear that day when he and his family first rode into San Antonio in what appeared to this gringo to be quite an unroadworthy rattletrap. Throwing care to the wind, all that could be packed into and on top of the bus, was--along with several cases of potables--and off we went to celebrate by touring the neighboring villages. A wonderful day to remember.

Alas and alack, the succeeding years were not kind to Don Ruben. The seller of the bus soon disappeared, with good reason, as it turned out--he was not the owner. The true owner then turned up, demanded and succeeded in re-obtaining his bus. The bank became very nervous about the whole deal and since it couldn't obtain the bus, it took Don Ruben's little farm. He, along with his two sons-in-law, were only fortunate enough to be hired by the bank as sharecroppers on the land which once was his.

I only learned of his plight on the second night of my revisit. The first night, because of my sudden reappearance, there wasn't time --so they complained and chided me for being so "sneaky"--to organize a "proper" welcoming fiesta. The second night we started off in a grand fashion: guarapo, aguardiente, a huge meal (i.e., a pig was

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A potent drink made of fermented sugar cane juice.

killed and roasted), a formal village meeting with introductory speeches, etc., etc. As on my very first night I was again asked to take the floor and hold forth, which I did with great gusto! Although my Spanish had deteriorated during the intervening years, I at least felt that I was communicating more effectively than on my very first night there. As I looked over and recognized and commented on the changes in the village and in the faces of the wonderful San Antonianos, I suddenly realized that someone was absent from his usual place at the head table. "Where is Don Ruben?" I asked. My "speech" which heretofore was punctuated by applause, cheers and laughter (usually in the wrong places due to my pronunciation, etc.) was suddenly greeted by a heavy silence: feet shuffled, eyes were downcast, no one spoke. Don Carlos finally muttered something about Don Ruben wasn't available "just then," so I continued and eventually all regained their spirits (liquid and emotional). Later I was told Don Ruben's tale of woe.

Don Ruben never did make an appearance during my revisit. Such is his shame and discouragement--which the whole village bears with him. Legal recourse would be a lengthy and costly process-- which he could not even begin to afford now--as well as a useless process since the culprit is nowhere to be found. And consequently, such too is his and the villagers' distrust and suspicion of any large commercial transactions--especially any involving the banks in Ciudad Andina. "Son para los oligarcas, no para los pobres." Better to pay up to 30% per year interest to someone you know if you need a loan, rather than to deal with those "sons of prostitutes" who run the banks in the cities.