Nava and Ruiz Families in Harlingen

Norman Rozeff, HHPS, May 2007

In late April 2007, James Williams sought family history information. One Martin Nava was reportedly killed on his doorstep in Harlingen by bootleggers with whom he was associated. This occurred in 1930 or 1931. His wife with whom he had children went on to marry Genaro Ruiz with whom she had two more children. Martin's son Andy (Andres) was thought by Mrs. Ruiz's grandson, James Williams, to have been born around 1929 and have died young (11 or 12). Local records appear to indicate otherwise.

The telephone directories available for Harlingen 1930 through 1954 provide some good clues as to the status of the two subject families for this period. For a good while there was but a single entry each for Nava and for Ruiz. This is especially interesting because the surname Ruiz is now very common in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Neither name appears before the 1937-38 directory.

Following is a chronological listing for both families:

1937-38 Nava, Andres (English speaker), employee H. E. Butt Co., residence 722 Curtis [H. E. Butt is the retail grocer who will later expand and become the predominant grocery chain in South Texas as H-E-B. All the resident addresses through the years are streets west of the railroad tracks in an area that is overwhelmingly Hispanic.]
1937-38 Ruiz, Genaro (Josefina [spouse]) (3) [number of people under 18 living in residence], salesman, residence 413 W. Polk

1939 Nava, Andres, (Juana Valadez), employee Piggly Wiggly [This was a southern chain grocery store from whom Butt acquired its Harlingen market.], 513 W. Monroe
1939 Ruiz, Andres, (Josefa Sada) (3) salesman, 415 W. Polk

1941 Nava, Andres, (Juanita) (1), employee H. E. Butt Grocery Co., 721 Wright Street
1941 Nava, Francisco, (Consuelo) (4), employee H. E. Butt Groc. Co. wholesale, 113 N. E Street
1941 Ruiz, Genaro, (Josefina) (4) laborer, 707 Hanson

1942-43 Nava, Andres, (Juanita) (2), truck driver H. E. Butt Grocery Co., 416 Olive
1942-43 Ruiz, Genaro, 513 W. Tyler

1944 Nava, Andres (Juanita) (2), cannery worker [This was likely the Harlingen Cannery, a subsidiary owned by H. E. Butt], 416 Olive
1944 Ruiz, Genaro, laborer, 513 W. Tyler

1946 Nava, Andres, (Juanita V.) (2), salesman, 409 Grant Ave.
Nava, Alfred B., 413 Grant
Nava, Francisco (Consuelo) (5), trucker, 609 W. Monroe
Nava, Juanita, student, 701 W. Tyler
1946 Ruiz, Marcello (Cecelia) (4), laborer, 833 Curtis
   [Ruiz, Genaro is no longer listed, and he may have died before late 1945 when the
directory was compiled. The Social Security death index shows a Genaro Ruiz born 8
March 1909 who died October 1954 in Texas. Mr. Williams believes the cause of death
may have been cancer.]

1948 Nava, Andres (Juanita) (2), laborer, Holtry Cottages

1950 Nava, Andres (Juanita) (3), employee Edelstein's [a Valley chain furniture store],
1210 South C Street

1952 Nava, Andres, (Juanita) (3), employee Edelstein's, 1210 S. C
   Nava, Frank (Consuelo) (7), Harlingen Canning Co., 1029 W. Madison

1954 Nava, Victor (Eufemia) (5), laborer, 616 W. Polk [The only Nava now listed.]
   Ruiz (ten listings)

In a May 3, 2007 e-mail James Williams states that Juanita Nava, his aunt, was the older
sister of Andy (Andres) who died. James' mother is Lydia Ruiz, who with her sister
Alicia, were the children of Genaro Ruiz and Josefina Sada, who were never actually
married.