



# BALLAD OF AN UNSUNG HERO

HEROIC LIFE OF PEDRO GONZALEZ

REVEALED IN PUBLIC TELEVISION SPECIAL

From his teenage years as Pancho Villa's telegraph operator to his pioneering radio career and unjust imprisonment in San Quentin, the legendary and heroic life of 89-year-old Pedro J. Gonzalez is chronicled in "Ballad of an Unsung Hero."

The 30-minute program, narrated by actor Julio Medina, makes extensive use of rare archival film from Mexico and the U.S., still photos from Gonzalez' large personal collection, and original music recording from the 20s and 30s to tell the story of his life in the style of a corrido, or Mexican ballad.

Gonzalez' story, symbolic of the history of people of Mexican descent in the United States, begins in 1910 during the Mexican Revolution against the dictator Porfirio Diaz. Pedro, a teenager working as telegraph operator, came face to face with the legendary General Pancho Villa when Villa's men captured him, suspecting that he had informed on them to the enemy. Gonzalez tells how Villa looked him in the eye and said, "Son, either I execute you, or you can go with me." Gonzalez chose to join Villa, staying with him until 1922.

After the revolution ended, Gonzalez, his wife and children joined thousands of Mexicans who migrated north to the United States. In booming Los Angeles, Pedro eventually became a recording star and in 1928 one of the first Spanish-speaking broadcasters in the U.S. Gonzalez tells how he eventually had his own show, broadcast live from the Teatro Hidalgo to the entire American Southwest. Each morning from 4 to 6 a.m., Mexican-American laborers going to work listened to Pedro and his singing group, Los Madrugadores (the Early Risers).

As the Great Depression hit Los Angeles, Mexican-Americans increasingly became the targets of racial fear and prejudice. Gonzalez believes his tremendous popularity and his outspoken protests against discrimination led to his arrest in 1934 on a trumped-up charge of rape. In spite of the recantation of the "victim," Gonzalez was sentenced to 50 years in San Quentin. He was paroled after six years and deported to Tijuana, Mexico, where he was instrumental in the development of radio in the border region.

In 1971, Gonzalez was allowed to re-enter the U.S. to be near his seven children. The old balladeer and his wife Maria settled in San Diego. There, in their home, surrounded by memories and friends, cameras capture them as he tells his amazing story.

"Ballad of an Unsung Hero" is a production of KPBS-TV and Cinewest Productions, San Diego. Producer is Paul Espinosa, Director is Isaac Artenstein. Writers are Paul Espinosa and Lorena Parlee. Associate Producer Lorena Parlee. National presentation and promotion of "Ballad of an Unsung Hero" is made possible by local McDonald's restaurants.



# BALLAD OF AN UNSUNG HERO

Espinosa Productions

## EL CORRIDO DE UN HEROE DESCONOCIDO

CAPTA LA HISTORIA DEL PUEBLO CHICANO

**El Corrido de un Heroe Desconocido** (Ballad of an Unsung Hero) es un programa que capta dramáticamente la historia y espíritu del pueblo Mexicano en los Estados Unidos durante este siglo. Producida por Paul Espinosa y narrada por el actor Julio Medina, esta presentación especial bilingüe documenta de manera conmovedora la vida de Pedro J. Gonzalez, antiguo residente de la frontera Mexicano-estadounidense, que a la edad de 89 años vivía en San Ysidro, California.

La historia de Pedro J. Gonzalez se inicia con su participación en la Revolución Mexicana como telegrafista de Pancho Villa. Pasa por una época de gran popularidad como anunciador de radio y artista de disco en Los Angeles en las décadas de los 1920 y los 1930. Llega después a su controvertido proceso que lo enviaría a 50 años de prisión en San Quintín.

El programa incluye documentales antiguos de la Revolución, fotografías históricas, música de la época grabada por Gonzalez y sus "Madrugadores" como también una serie de entrevistas dinámicas con el mismo, y su esposa que lo ha acompañado durante 66 años, María Salcido de Gonzalez. **El Corrido de un Heroe Desconocido** es la crónica de una larga vida llena de aventuras, tragedia, pasión y colorido, marcada por un fuerte orgullo y conciencia hacia su pueblo y cultura.

Este programa ha recibido distinguidos honores que incluyen: Emmy, Best Documentary, National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, San Diego Chapter, (1984); Blue Ribbon, American Film Festival, (1984); Cine Golden Eagle, (1984); Golden Mike Award, Best Documentary, Radio & TV New Association of Southern California, (1983); Top Award, 5th National Latino Film & Video Festival, El Museo del Barrio, New York, (1985); y presentación especial en INPUT 84, The International Public Television Screening Conference, en Charleston, South Carolina, (1984); y por British Film Institute for BBC-London Theatre Festival, (1986). El programa representó a los Estados Unidos en los festivales más importantes del mundo con el CINE GOLDEN EAGLE.

**El Corrido de un Heroe Desconocido** es una co-producción de KPBS-TV/San Diego y Cinewest Producciones, producida por Paul Espinosa, dirigida por Isaac Artenstein, escrita por Paul Espinosa y Lorena Parlee, y con Lorena Parlee como Productora Asociada.