

# Captain Jose Lopez Naranjo: An Indian's Iron Stirrups

By Nick Vigil de Naranjo



V.I.P. PUBLISHING

To Lucille

for putting up with my mentioning of Captain Naranjo's name, everyday day since we  
have been married. You are my Catarina!



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VIP Publications  
Denver, Colorado

nartewa@msn.com

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This story begins within the environs of New Mexico, in the kingdom known as New Spain. We find Jose Naranjo and his wife, Catarina, in the Tewa village of Santa Clara preparing for Jose's participation in an expedition into the Tierra Incognita, north of the settlements and pueblos of New Mexico. Vivid details of stepped landscapes, rolling plains, rivers, creeks, mountain peaks, the colorful uniforms of the Spanish militia and their Indian auxiliaries, offers a glimpse into a period twenty-seven years after the Spanish led Re-entrada of 1692-93. Individual characters and events come to life as we follow its chief scout – Naranjo – along on the Villasur Expedition in the year 1720.

Struggling between the faithful performance of his military duties and his strong desire to remain with his wife in New Mexico, Jose chooses to continue to serve the Spanish cause, leading them through territories he had explored several times before this mission. Jose's adventure gets underway as the Villasur Expedition, under the command of Colonial Pedro de Villasur, leaves the Villa of Santa Fe, wives, children, mothers and fathers, to establish a presidio and trading post on the Rio Jesus Maria in Nebraska of the Pawnee nation.

The expedition leads us into contact with the Pawnee and Otto Indians, and the biggest battle of Jose's exemplary life as he and the "army" from New Mexico fought a desperate battle, ending in the massacre of nearly half the expedition. The survivors return to Santa Fe, and we get a feeling for how their families feel as they contemplate the loss of New Mexico's best soldiers, Indian allies, husbands, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, and grandfathers.

In the end, a buffalo hide painting known as the Segesser Hide Painting II (re-discovered in Switzerland by Dr. Thomas E. Chavez, Ph.D – former director of the Museum at the Governor's Palace in Santa Fe, New Mexico) is created to use in the investigation of what happened, and, possibly, to honor the artist's fallen comrades. In this painting Captain Naranjo's profiled image has, for many years, been tentatively identified as figure 166, the Indian on horseback standing tall in his big Mexican stirrups.

In commentary, I have included family tree documentation linking my family to a member of the Villasur party. The physical characteristics between Naranjo's image, and mine – his great-grandson – adds family likeness as further evidence that that Indian recorded on the Segesser Hide II is Captain Jose Naranjo!

Also included is the surviving portion of a copy of The Tamariz Diary, containing information about their arrival at the Rio Jesus Maria, and the exploration leading to the ambush.

Pictures, drawings, several artists' renditions of Naranjo's image, and the Segesser hide image offers various visual perspectives into this legendary Indian's life. I Hope you enjoy the book!

## II. A POEM: JOSE LOPEZ NARANJO



Ahead of Colonial Villasur with his scouts he did go,  
A legend among legends this man called Naranjo.

Whose father was Domingo of 1680 fame;  
A rebel war chief with Popay, mentioned by name.

But Jose helped the Spanish Crown retake the precious land,  
When he descended Taos Mountain to join de Vargas' band.

Josefillo "El Espanol," the Indian youth did de Vargas meet,  
He put stirrups on Naranjo's horse, spurs on his native feet.

Appointed Capitan de Armas by the Viceroy of Mexico,  
An Indian with authority from El Paso to El Cuartolejo.

Set off on this march to face the French, Pani and Otto,  
To engage them in battle on his trusty steed El Moro!

On that morning, August 14 seventeen hundred and twenty,  
They were ambushed by the enemy with warriors aplenty!

On the banks of the Rio Jesus-Maria, his bones left unburied,  
Forever with dead compadres to Nebraska he was married.

Never to be forgotten around Santa Fe New Mexico,  
This great Indian legend of Santa Clara, Capt. Jose Lopez Naranjo!

## CHAPTER 1

### HOME SWEET HOME

**B**rilliant segments of orange sunlight began to penetrate, like rays of celestial knives, through the still darkened, clouded horizon east of the Tewa village of Santa Clara, stimulating its inhabitants to life. Jose stirred from his sleep, sitting up in bed as he opened his well-rested eyes. He peeked out the open window, focusing his vision, with arched brows, eastward, towards the direction of the rising sun. Silhouettes of nearby buttes and of animals moving in a shadowy hiatus along a small ravine conveyed a welcoming gesture offered by the new day that awaited New Mexico's chief scout.

His adobe dwelling in the cool pueblo was surrounded by the homes of his relatives, friends, and comrades-at-arms who rendered military service to the Spanish government in civil matters and in affairs of war. The family had been staying the past two days and nights at Jose's traditional home in the pueblo, instead of at their homestead east at Santa Cruz de la Canada. It was more convenient for them to arrive two days earlier for the big get-together and send-off at the river several villages had planned for later that morning.

Jose and Catarina were looking forward to seeing their relatives, and his brothers of the auxiliary.

Jose's two grandsons, five years old Geronimo and the baby, Antonio the Second, lay next to him, sleeping soundly. Little Geronimo wriggled on the bed as he stretched his small body to its fullest length. He raised his little arms over his head, yawning and scrunching his nose at the bridge, and sniffing a bit. Then he rolled over on his side to continue his peaceful slumber, muttering in his sleep. Baby Antonio remained steadfast, laying there peacefully and quietly, moving not once, except to sniffle, too.

Jose could hear the chirping and the singing of the birds, flying cheerfully in the direction of the nearby river to indulge of its sweet waters. The irritating sounds of marauding crows diverted Jose's attention towards the tribal cornfields. Their high-pitched songs of contented feeding could be heard changing to discordant squawks of frustration, compliments of a stray coyote that was occupying itself with the task of hunting one down; instead chasing them off in its awkward attempt.

Outside, the adobe walls were coming alive, transforming from shadowy cold brown clay to a warm palette awash with vivid orange hues from the sun's waxing radiance and light. Jose stared outside for several moments through the weather worn, grayish, wooden framed window at the dark image of the large, potted yucca plant near the horse corral. Its silhouetted spines were changing from a colorless form, awakening to a revitalized, yellow-green glow as it absorbed the sun's gracious energy into its cool veins.

Several minutes passed, which seemed like hours, when Jose finally broke from his deep trance. Then, without bringing his eyes back into the house, he called to his wife. "Mija! Where are you, Catarina?" Jose bellowed in a gentle and loving manner. He turned from looking out the window to see Catarina working in the other room, in the small kitchen, no more than fifteen feet from him.

Catarina had been up and moving about, long before the sun's light could be detected over the horizon. She was in the kitchen cooking blue atole cornmeal for Jose's breakfast. It was during this time, in the early morning hours when the air is cool and fresh, that Catarina liked to clean and prepare delicious recipes for the day. She had just finished the chore of grinding more blue corn for piki-bread, all the while cooking chicken mole and corn – elotes – over the hot wood-burning stove. Yellow and blue flames could be seen escaping out the top of the load door she doubled for a puela to make the tortillas. They would be sharing this tasty meal today at the big get-together.

The aroma of fresh pan baking in the adobe ovens, attended in turn by Catarina and several other women of the village, drifted into their various dwellings with the early morning breeze, filling their small homes with the song of a thousand mornings. The smell of the baking bread in the adobe ovens – called ornos by the Spanish – also seemed to be the cause for a large gathering of various birds singing in the nearby trees in anticipation of feasting on a morsel or two, even on some crumbs.

Catarina finally looked up at Jose (who was still sitting on the bed) with a bright smile and a sparkle in her eyes. She was cleaning the large grinding stone, the metate, on the floor in the kitchen when she opened her lips to speak. "Esperate, mi amor!" she finally responded, sweeping the corn dust off the metate with a small broom.

Jose reached for a comb made of buffalo bone lying on the small table next to the bed. He lifted it to his head and began to run its teeth through his long, brown hair streaked with white strands of age, experience, and wisdom. Deciding it was time to get up, he rolled out of the bed, planting his feet firmly on a tirado – a throw rug – lying on the floor. Jose stood up and proceeded to stretch his body and arms towards high heaven, releasing a growling yawn that sounded like a jaguar in its awakening moments. Standing at the edge of the bed he stared at Catarina for several seconds as he absorbed her lovely presence through his keen eyes – the spying eyes of Nuevo Mexico’s most experienced scout – into his heart. He said nothing, but just returned her smile. She meant the world to him and he loved her very much, enjoying twenty-six years of devoted matrimony.

She never tired of making him comfortable when he was home. He used to be away from home more often when they were first married, but now that he was semi-retired from the militia he was home most of the time now. Yet, he was always willing to serve, and to go on far off missions, as when he was ordered by the Viceroy of Mexico to go to travel the very long distance to El Cuartolejo in the eastern plains of the Colorado territory in 1715. Other than that, he was happy to stay home with Catarina, but was soon to leave her again, this time for about a year.