

Every morning before breakfast at the inn here in Santa Fe, I take a walk down Agua Fria Street and make a turn at the Church of the Virgin of Guadalupe. For the first time in years of visits here, few Mexican workers line the church front or gather across Guadalupe Street on park benches on the Capitol grounds.

The scattering on the sidewalk at my turn up Guadalupe Street are much friendlier than in previous years. Hard times, I supposed, is the reason, but the lady at the inn thinks the new law in Arizona also frightened the unpapered aliens that New Mexico might pass a similar law.

Her bloodline lives on the same property (the inn), that has been in this Spanish family for 147 years. Quick to prove her point, she said one of her cousins was arrested in Arizona and held six hours in jail until he produced his birth certificate. His driver's license and a deed to his home from his briefcase failed to satisfy the Arizona authorities he was not a Mexican.

She continued to say, "Dark-skinned as I am, I could be arrested in Arizona on the same suspicion."

What a shock! Down home, speculation held that maybe the Arizona governor wanted to bluff the feds into action,

or the ranchers' desperate situation along the border forced the State to act. We would be sure to sympathize with the ranchers.

However the case, we never see wet Mexican sign at the ranch, or haven't in 10 or 15 years. We are less than 150 miles straight through from Mexico. It would not be unlikely if problems arose from the drug smugglers. Already, 50 miles from us, an armed wet with a criminal record was arrested last month.

The ranch stays unlocked except the deer hunters' cabins and an old gasoline tank we lost the key to after gasoline delivery rose in price. Unpapered aliens or passport *hombres* other than *viejos* (old ones) never work on ranches today. Same is true of raids by Border Patrolmen. One stakeout on the railroad crossing at Pumpkin Center last winter can't be termed surveillance, can it?

Cities are where the unpapered aliens work. In a restaurant yesterday, I talked to a waitress from Guatemala and a bus boy from Belize. The reason, I think, I meet so many aliens from Spanish speaking countries is that shortgrassers off ranches speak some Spanish, some Mexican lingo, and bits of English. The mixture makes the aliens trust us. The aliens sense that anyone who speaks that

slowly and that jumbled couldn't possibly pass a Civil Service examination to be an undercover agent.

Power of suggestion caused a sense of doubt whether I carried sufficient proof of citizenship. The way Arizona and New Mexico judges treat Texas drivers in violation of the law, it would be no surprise for his or her honor to order a trace of our family tree back to the Garden of Eden after a glance at my driver's license.

Over the years no one - or only in one instance - has an official, an office, a port of entry, a toll point, a roadblock, or a combination of all of the above ever questioned if I was from Mertzon, or from a West Texas ranch. It makes no difference to us living out on the '09 Divide or, say, down on Mustang Draw or High Lonesome if all the states require proof of citizenship.

Not only do we talk different, but notice sometime how our noses peel in the summer and our feet turn in the year around. It hasn't been awfully long since 25-watt bulbs blinded us the first couple of nights in town back when we bedded down so early the chickens lost track of time and arose so far before sun-up that the roosters grew long, curved spurs before puberty started them to crow.

But about the prosecutors and the prosecuted, it's hard to choose sides until you are hurt by the drug

smugglers or arrested by the Border patrol or picked up by a deputy sheriff in Arizona. For once, it would be nice to be on the winning side, whatever the case. Say pick up the paper and read: "Joint action yesterday in Washington by a huge majority of both houses passed a bill to turn full control of the illegal alien problem over to agriculture interests. Speakers of both houses agreed no other segment of our country would act as impartial and unselfish as agriculture. Countries all over the world heralded approval of the move, shooting goodwill to astronomical heights."

Sure to be lonely in the restaurant dining rooms and kitchens if the wets leave town. Be unhandy washing the tablecloths and ironing napkins, too. Too bad we can't talk this over on the side, like behind the scene. The unpapered guys I've known have been fun to work with. Nor would I be much help throwing Spanish people in jail.