



Borderman: Memoirs of Federico José María Ronstadt

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Born in Sonora in 1868 to a Mexican mother and a German father, Federico Ronstadt was the quintessential borderman. He came to Arizona Territory as a young man to learn a trade and eventually became an American citizen; but with many relatives on both sides of the border, Federico was equally at home in Mexico and in his adopted country.

Writing proudly of his Mexican and American heritages, Ronstadt offers readers an extraordinary portrait of the Arizona-Mexico borderlands during the late nineteenth century. His memoirs provide a richness of detail and insight unmatched by traditional histories, relating such scenarios as the hardships of Yaqui hardrock miners working under primitive conditions, the travails of pearl divers in the Gulf of California, and the insurrection of Francisco Serna in 1875 Sonora. They also depict the simple activities of childhood, with its schooling and musical training, its games and mischief. Ronstadt relates his apprenticeship to a wagon- and carriage-maker in Tucson, recalling labor relations in the shop, the establishment of his own business, and the joys and anguish of his personal life. He tells of how he drew on talents nurtured in childhood to become a musician and bandleader, playing weekly concerts with Club Filarmónica Tucsonense for nine years—musical talents that were eventually passed on to his children, his grandchildren (including Linda), and great-grandchildren.

Through Ronstadt's memories, we are better able to understand the sense of independence and self-reliance found today among many lifelong residents of Sonora and Baja California—people isolated from major supply sources and centers of power—and to appreciate a different view of Tucson's past. Enhanced by 22 historical photos, *Borderman* is a treasure trove of historical source material that will enlighten all readers interested in borderlands history.

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