

History archivist, author reminisces on Azteca

A few years back, among this writer's weekly contributions to a series of articles on local history (*Visiting the Past*), was an article on a popular hamburger house that caught the attention of a Laredo native living in San Antonio.

His name is J. Gilberto Quezada. Gilberto, having been born and raised in the Azteca neighborhood, read the article on the hamburger place where he apparently sampled the burgers.

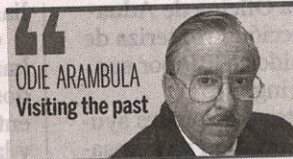
When business interests purchased the site (near corner of Flores and Lincoln), the Coney Island was relocated to a site on facing the grounds where once stood a Laredo ISD elementary school (Central).

The Tivoli was one of four movie houses run by George Spence of Laredo Theaters in the central business district.

The other movie houses were the Rialto, the Royal and the Plaza run by Spence in the heart of downtown Laredo. Laredo Theaters also had the Mexico Theater at Scott and Santa Maria.

When a privately owned drive-in theater, The Tower, opened on north San Bernardo, Laredo Theaters also went outdoors with The Bordertown on north San Bernardo and El Charro on East Saunders (US 59).

On the west side of Zarate Creek, at 311 Lincoln Street, was the Cine Azteca where this writer and other Martin High School contemporaries of



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Visiting the past

the mid-1950s would work the usher aisles at the movie house that the Azteca Barrio residents knew as the *Cine Azteca*.

What does J. Gilbert Quezada have to do with the Azteca neighborhood and the Cine Azteca? Plenty and much more as a native son of Laredo, a historian, archivist and award-winning author of the political biography of Manuel B. Bravo and Zapata County (*Border Boss: Manuel B. Bravo and Zapata County*, published by Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

An on-line release on the book announced the hardbound was published in 1999 and the paperback hit the streets in 2002. The Sunday, June 4, 2000, edition of this newspaper headlined Author Nets Prestigious Award for 'Border Boss.'

"The Cine Azteca was in the heart of the historic barrio," Quezada wrote in an e-mail to this writer. "It is estimated that the building was constructed with an expansion high facade and a Mission Revival parapet during the 1920s. It was named the Teatro Nacional and was used for vaudeville Mexican shows."

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