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Life story of the master saddler  
José Luis Morales Carbajal

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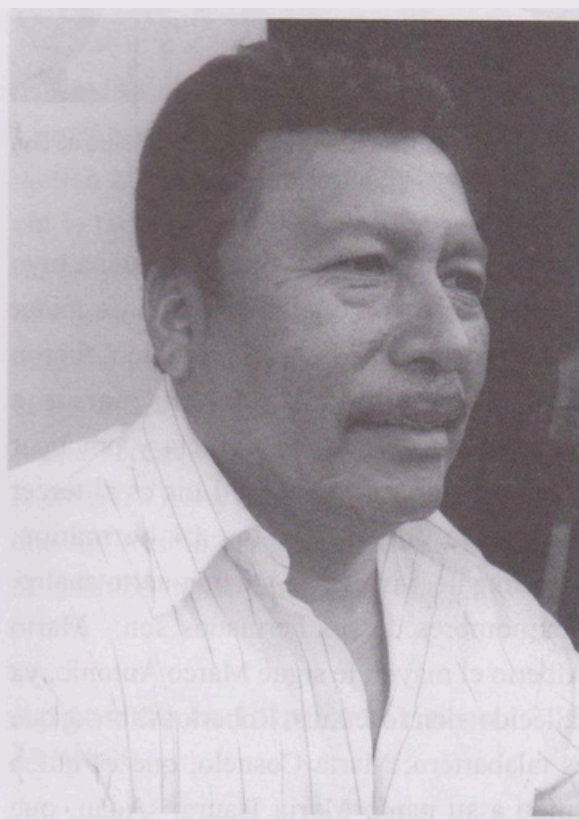
## Introduction

The object of this document is to portray the life of the master saddler José Luis Morales Carbajal, an outstanding craftsman from Taxisco department of Santa Rosa, who, since he was a child, learned the art of saddlery, being able to set up a workshop of his own to manufacture saddles and saddle-related products. Over time, he learned the leather tanning technique which allowed him to, in addition to saddlery, set up a tannery to produce bovine leather hides or buckskins for making saddles.

The fact that don José Luis Morales Carbajal is the only saddler from Taxisco, that was able to fully develop the branches of saddlery and tannery is what justifies his biopic study, since it allows to know about his life full of important historical interest anecdotes due to the relationship his family held with doctor Juan José Arévalo Bermejo and the different stages of the economic development of the country that he had to experience, but also to know about the artisanal processes of saddlery and leather tanning.

## Family

Don José Luis Morales Carbajal was born on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1947, on Los Cerritos farm in Taxisco, department of Santa Rosa. This farm was property of the ex-president of Guatemala Juan José Arévalo. He is currently 58 years old, and he professes evangelical Christian religion.



Master José Luis Morales Carbajal

He is son of Ricardo Morales, a farmer, who is still alive and is 84 years old. His mother died 25 years ago, and her name was Zoila Esperanza Carbajal Rojas. She died, according to what don José Luis relates, *at a young age due to diabetes because she did not take care of herself and did not follow a proper diet and suffered a diabetic coma that caused her death.*



Don Ricardo Morales, 84 years old and father of don José Luis Morales Carbajal.

His parents had 14 children, and his mother had to devote herself to the housework and to the care of her children. His parents, according to him, were hard workers and taught him to behave correctly. Don José Luis is the third child of the couple. From the 14 children, there are currently 10 alive and 4 have died. The names of his siblings are: Mario Alberto, the eldest, then comes Marco Antonio who already died, don José Luis, Roberto Alfonso who is a saddler, Marta Consuelo who takes care of their father, María Isaura, Adán who is also a saddler, Manuel who already died, María del Carmen, Leticia and Odilia who already died, Zoila Esperanza, Carlos

Amado and Maritza. Don José Luis taught his brothers Marco Antonio, who already died, and Roberto Alfonso and Adán the art of saddlery.



Master José Luis Morales in company of his father don Ricardo Morales and his sister Marta Consuelo Morales Carbajal.

## His Childhood

His father was a countryman, as he said, *one of those honest and hard workers that were in Los Cerritos farm of Mr. Arévalo.* In that place don José Luis started his life and he and his siblings were raised. Don José Luis says he did not have the chance to experience a childhood where he was able to play because he had to work and study since he was a child. He said he was always *limited.* He always wanted to work on something of his own that allowed him to live from that. His biggest aspiration was to earn something to support his parents and younger siblings, *because it is always needed some help from someone to encourage you or collaborate with you.*

His father never was a landowner. He cultivated on doctor Arévalo's farm, of which



they were settlers and managed it themselves. They were the only ones living in Los Cerritos and were able to use the land to cultivate because, as don Jose Luis said, *there was plenty of idle land to be worked*. Most of the people could decide which was the best place to sow and they sowed there. His father, with his children's support, always sowed ten blocks of corn. In that time the use of lands did not have to be paid to the owners, on the contrary, they were *delighted* that people would work their lands since they were covered with forest. The landowners liked countrymen, that were their settlers, to clean their lands to make them cultivable. As don José Luis said, *the land was so good that great cornfields were grown, and no fertilizer was needed*. His father always sowed cornfields and he also had some cows. According to don José Luis, that was a great time because the family was together. They were 14 siblings, and a cousin lived with them with whom *they had a lot of fun*. They would plant large corn plantations, and consequently, harvested large quantities of grain. After harvesting it, they got pasture for their livestock. The cows were well fed by the stubble they ate, and the milking gave them enough milk to produce cheese and cream.

When their father harvested the corn crop, the sons helped to harvest it, and people came to their house to buy the product. Don José Luis says that during that time *money was short, but it was worth it*.

Don José Luis had the chance to meet Doctor Juan José Arévalo when he had just left the presidency of the Republic, as he frequently visited the farm. Don José Luis was still a little boy as he was not yet in school. When referring to doctor Arévalo's personality, he said *he was a very caring and special person. When he came to the farm, he would tell us Come! Come! And he would give each one of us one quetzal. When I was older, I met him several times in Taxisco and would talk with him for a long time*.

When don José Luis was a child, doctor Arévalo founded a school on Los Cerritos farm that would teach up to third grade. Don José Luis and his siblings would study in the morning, and work with his father in the afternoon. They cleaned the cornfield, herded the goats, put them in the corral and tied up the cows. Those were their daily activities during their childhood. He remembers his first year of school with enthusiasm because he had a teacher that was very patient, she was special when dealing with the students. Her name was María Teresa Véliz, she already died, she taught him to read and write. The second and third year he had another teacher called Guadalupe López Chanquen, who is still alive.

### **The origin of the saddlery in Taxisco**

The saddlery started in Taxisco in 1961, when don Juan Álvarez, with his wife and two children moved from Escuintla to Taxisco, and with the financial support



from a partner he founded the “Universal” saddlery.

Don Juan Álvarez learned the art of saddlery in Escuintla and taught it to his workers in Taxisco. He also taught this art to his son Juan Manuel Álvarez since he was a little child and was now in elementary school. He was born in Taxisco two years after they settled there. After finishing elementary school, Juan Manuel moved to the city where he studied in the Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Comerciales, graduating as a Chartered Accountant. He worked as such for four years in the municipality of Cobán, in a company that built schools.

Then he got married and his father asked him to work with him and moved back to Taxisco in 1988. Later, his father got sick and died. After his father died in 1993, he inherited the Universal saddlery and worked there for several years. A little less than five years ago he quit working there and rented it to rededicate himself to his profession as an accountant. He is currently working in the Ministry of Public Finance.

Universal saddlery originated the other four in Taxisco, since the owners were all trainees and operators from it and learned the art with Juan Álvarez. The first one to set up his business was don José Luis Morales Carbajal, owner of the “Del Sur” saddlery. Then don Carlos Enrique López did it with the “Cowboy” saddlery. Lastly, Pablo Marroquin Cota with the “Nueva Juventud” saddlery.

Until January 2006, don José Luis had two sales rooms: “Del Sur No.1” saddlery, located on the main street of Taxisco, on the first floor of the Municipal Building. And the “Del Sur No.2” saddlery, located in the Petén neighborhood in front of the livestock exposition facilities on the highway leading to the border with El Salvador. In this place he has a sales room, the workshop where the handicrafts are made and tannery. In addition, his residency is located here.



Aracely Esquivel Vásquez, in the Del Sur No.2 saddlery workshop, looking at the artisan Ricardo Adolfo Gómez who proceeded to thread the needles to sew a girdle.



The master saddler don José Luis Morales Carbajal shows the researcher the machines used to sew leather items.

## The start of don José Luis in the art of saddlery

Since he was a child, don José Luis dedicated himself to the art of saddlery and, as he says, there is no history of family members who were engaged in that trade. The idea of becoming a saddler came as a result that, since he was a child, he really liked the country, and he and his dad have always had livestock. Back in the day when he was a child, his dad had livestock and some horses, and it made him *really angry* that there were no saddles to ride the horses. *I only rode bareback or on a few saddles in pieces.*

A childhood friend bought a new saddle and when he saw it, he really liked it and said to his father: *Buy me a saddle! And my father answered: Wait until there is money because we do not have it to buy one. So, I said: The first day that I go to study, I will search for a place to learn how to work the leather to make myself a saddle, because it is unacceptable that I do not have a saddle. I own a horse, I do not like not having a new saddle. It is not fair father! It is necessary that I make a saddle myself. I am going to learn!*

After finishing third grade, he moved to Taxisco to continue his studies. As he told his father he would do and, being only nine years old, he looked for a saddlery to learn. During that time there was only the Universal saddlery property of don Juan Álvarez, who gave him a job. During that time, *I was nine years old and was not serious yet.*

*But I tried my best and don Juan became fond of me. It was difficult to work with don Juan because he was very demanding, but I put up with it because I wanted to learn. He worked and studied at the same time. He says it was hard because he was just a child and was not used to interact with adults, and did not have the physical capacity to work like a man.*

He studied in the morning and the teachers, as he said, were very strict. He had to study on Saturdays until 12:00 pm. He always was a dedicated student and during the time he studied in Taxisco he was the school's standard-bearer. After coming back from his job, he studied and did his homework. Sometimes he was so tired and preferred to rest to wake up very early the next day to finish his homework.



The master José Luis Morales Carbajal shows articles that are produced in his workshop.

After one year of working, when he was ten years old, he was able to make saddles, girths and other leather items. When he finished his first year studying in Taxisco,



during the vacation, he did not go back to Los Cerritos farm because he decided to continue working in the saddlery.

He recalls that on his first day working, as he was new, he had to hand shafts. He says it was an easy task and finished it fast because he was very active and would spend a lot of time doing nothing. Because of this he would get sleepy, so he said to don Juan Look! Give me something else to do. Don Juan realized I really liked the saddlery, so he told me: Look, there is no one to help me during the night, come and stay until ten o'clock in the evening. That was the time when lights went off because during that time in Taxisco there was a power plant that operated between seven and ten o'clock in the evening.

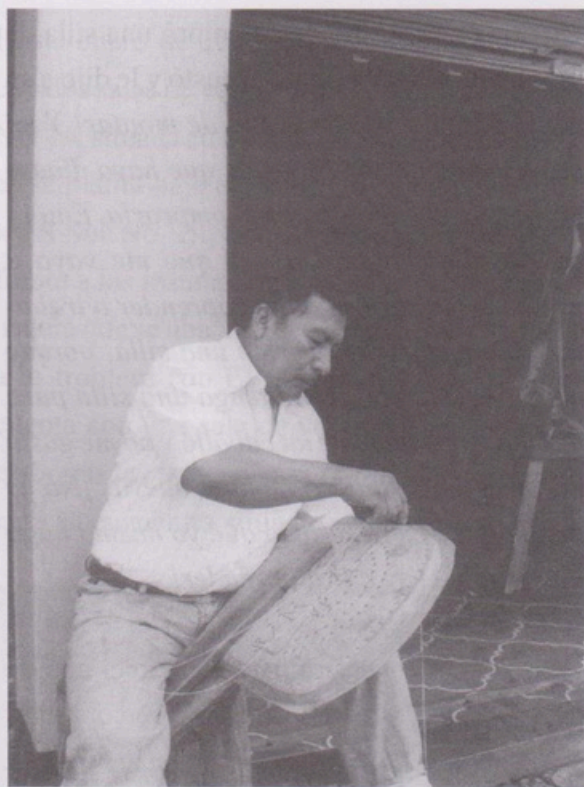
Don José Luis remembers that he was paid Q2.00 a week and it was a lot of money for him because it was enough to eat.

So, from the first day he arrived at Taxisco in 1956 to date, don José Luis has worked in the saddlery and has no wish to stop doing it because he likes it. Even if he was not able to continue working, he would still do it through the operators that he hires to produce the leather. It has been his dream since he was a child, when he hoped to have his own saddle to ride his horse.



Nery Leonel Santos Hernández prepares the materials to dress a shaft. His job consists of making saddles.

The work that he did at night consisted of ironing the leather, making edges, sewing, polishing the edges of the finished pieces and any other necessary activity. In exchange for his job, don Juan would give him some cents. It was not too much because during that time everything was very cheap.



The master José Luis Morales sews a car backrest.

When don José Luis left Los Cerritos farm, with his older sister, their father bought them a house in San Miguel neighborhood in Taxisco, so the two of them could live there.

Then another one of his siblings went to live with them to continue his studies and graduated from High School. Don José Luis says that during the time that they lived alone in the neighborhood they did not have any problem and says that *during that time everything was healthy, the people were pacific and collaborative, very welcoming and they really liked us where we lived. We never had problems and the first and second year living there passed, we grew up and everything was calm.*

The time went by, and he finished elementary school. To celebrate it, one of his friends suggested not going to school to make a reunion. They went to a river and his classmates brought beer and cigarettes; it was the first time that don José Luis had experienced this kind of entertainment. Their teacher found out about it and the next day they were sent to the director of the establishment where they were forced to talk about what they had done. He says that some incriminated against others and, in the end, they were all punished. Although, for don José Luis it was an experience that helped him realize the good and bad things about vices, also his father advised him not to drink or smoke. Despite that, that time, he said: *I had a beer and smoked one cigarette.*

After finishing elementary school, he was not able to continue studying because he did not have the financial resources to do it. Since he was a good student, he got a scholarship to continue with middle school in the department of Jutiapa. He went there to find out the requirements to enter but he considered it was too difficult.

Jutiapa was too far away, and he did not have the resources to support himself and had no known people to support him.

He said he would have liked to continue studying but it was not possible and now, that he is older, he is not interested anymore because *I do not have the energy that I had when I was younger and as I have a lot of things to do neither have I the time. Although, I would like to get a technical course in INTECAP.*

After finishing elementary school, for some time he continued working at the Universal saddlery. Although, his dream was to work more to become independent and have his own job. That is why he went to Escuintla and worked at don Napoleón Pineda's saddlery, who is already dead, who had a big workshop. After that he worked at don Alfonso Contreras' saddlery, also located in Escuintla.

When he was young, 17 or 18 years old, he thought about having a girlfriend. At 19 years old he got married with doña Mirta Lidia García, who studied in the Instituto Normal para señoritas Centro América INCA and in the Instituto Belén. She reached the fifth grade of teacher training, but she was not able to graduate because in that time married women were not allowed to study, especially if they were pregnant.

When don José Luis got married, he was still working with don Alfonso Contreras. What he earned was not enough to cover the expenses of two people. But, as he said, *I was so in love, and I needed company. I wanted my wife to stay at home, so I got married and went back to Taxisco.*



He went back to work at Universal saddlery for four years. His wife helped him with the household chores, but after a year and a half after getting married, she got very sick, and her treatment resulted in high costs. Currently, doña Mirta is still sick and has permanent medical treatment, despite this her health condition is stable. She does not do a lot of work at home because she dedicates herself to taking care of her mother, who is affected by diabetes.

They had three daughters, the eldest called Marisol who died when she was a child. The others are Edna Roselia, an elementary school teacher who works at national teaching, and Lesly is in commerce. Both are married. Don José Luis has four grandchildren, one girl and three boys. He has only married once *and I want to continue like this because I love my family, and I do not want to bother them.*

His daughters' childhood was a difficult time for don José Luis due to his wife's illness, since he had to work harder in his home. During the night he had to prepare the baby bottles of his daughters because their mother was not able to feed them. He would bathe, feed and take care of them. After doing the household chores he would go to work at four o'clock in the morning and sometimes he had to work until ten o'clock at night.

The income he received thanks to his work was not enough, that is why he decided to work on his own.

His biggest dream was to have his own house. He partnered with a friend and started working at a saddlery of their own. He worked with his friend for a year and then his friend left. Unfortunately, the income he was getting was not enough and he had to close the business. Then, he decided to work with his father-in-law, who at that time was engaged in watermelon cultivation. *He handled a lot of money. When the harvest was over, he gave me some cents and said to me: "this is your payment for working with me". And he gave me Q400.00 that was a lot of money back then.*

After the harvest, his father-in-law advised him to dedicate himself to the art of saddlery because it was a good business. For don José Luis the saddlery represented an important part of his life, because since he was a child, he had the dream to learn about it, and as he says, *it has been my best job because I have gotten all the necessary resources to raise my daughters and to live to this day from saddlery.* He took his fathers-in-law advise who went with him to the municipality of Samayac, Suchitepéquez, to buy tanned leather. The price of the leather at that time was Q6.00 and Q8.00 depending on the size.

With the product he bought, he started working in the saddlery again to gain enough money to build his house. After one year of working, he built his first house, located near the town's municipality. Currently, his daughter Lesly lives there with her husband and children.

His father gave him the land where he built his first house, with a legal document with his name on it. When he already had the deed evidencing ownership of the property, he started the construction of his house. According to him, if his father had not given him the deed, he would not have built anything. His father-in-law offered him a piece of his land to build the house, but he did not accept. He told his father-in-law that he would only build in his own land, *because later there are problems and the sacrifice that one makes ends up wasted.*

Approximately 30 years ago, don José Luis rented a local of the municipality of Taxisco, that is where he started his saddlery and sales room. Now he has two locals next to each other in the building. These two locals are the "Del Sur No.1" saddlery, who are only used as sales room. He says that the rent he pays is affordable. Thanks to the location of the locals the products are sold regularly. Even though the products have been sold since January 2006, he gave the locals where the "Del Sur No.1" saddlery was to his daughters. Edna has a sale of clothing and other items, and Lesly has a sale of cell phones called Taxitel. In addition to this business, Lesly also has a beef butchery shop. Both businesses are run by their owners.

After several years working at the saddlery, a friend that went to Costa Rica encouraged him to start tanning his own leather and gave him some instructions on how to do it. After receiving the guidelines for leather tanning, he began to work manually tanning them.

He said it is a very difficult and laborious task, it requires a lot of people to work in it, around four or six workers.

Then he started buying big quantities of leather. He would go in his pick-up to San José Pinula, municipality of the department of Guatemala, where he would buy 10 to 15 quintals of leather each time to tan them in a traditional way. During that time, he recalls not knowing too much about leather tanning, but as he became acquainted with various people he met in the place where he bought chemicals and materials needed for leather tanning, he learned.

That is how he improved the leather tanning process and started his project. During the process he began to realize where the faults were, it allowed him to improve the leather production since it was used to make the leather products he sold.

If the leather is not properly tanned, it is not possible to make the products of that material because it would be of a bad quality and would not be sold. The attention given to clients must be considered to give them good quality products to be competitive in the market.



That is why it is necessary to do a good job and maintain a unique quality product. *That is why I have taught many young men the job I do and how to do it in a good way to get a good result.*

On time, when he used to buy supplies at the "El Quetzal" furrier's shop in Guatemala City, he met Mr. Rigoberto Canastú, owner of a saddlery in Quetzaltenango, who went there to deliver some material. They talked about their jobs, and thanks to that, don Rigoberto offered to teach him how to tan the leather. Don José Luis went to Quetzaltenango and visited the saddlery to find out the procedures of leather tanning. Don Rigoberto was the one that offered to sell him a *drum* to mechanically tan leather.

Don José Luis says that his father-in-law worked in Taxisco partnered with a man that appreciated him so much because he had grown up with his family and both used to plant and cultivate watermelons. Taking advantage of the fact that his father-in-law planted watermelons on a farm, he bought some steers and put them out to pasture in that farm.

The owners of the farm charged them little for cattle pasture. He managed to acquire 20 cattle, which he sold at the right fattening time. With the money he received from the sale of the livestock, he was able to buy don Rigoberto Canastú's drum, with which he still works and allows him to mechanically tan the leather, leaving behind the manual tanning process.



The drum or fuller, a device for leather tanning.

With this machine he increased his production and made more profits, that allowed him to buy the materials to build the house where he is currently living. He says that originally the place where his residency and workshop are located, only had a *small wooden house* and the rest of the land was full of big rocks more than one meter high. He spent two years with a quarryman experimenting, breaking rocks. With that material he made the castings for the construction of his house and workshop, and he gave away the leftover rocks. He says that he bought that place full of rocks because he had the financial resources to buy it and because there was not any other place near the town. He said, *one should not be a conformist and should aspire to something. The good thing is to work hard for what you want to appreciate it and to get encouragement from it, because, otherwise, you do not give the things you have acquired the value they have.* He has been living there for 13 years with his wife, one of his daughters and two grandchildren.

He says that, during Vinicio Cerezo's term in office, it was a good time because he had the chance to export his leather products to the United States under agreements made by the government with them. He went to visit the commercial attaché of the embassy of the United States, who helped him to export as much of his manufactured products as possible. Don José Luis took advantage of the opportunity he had and exported considerable quantities of products made from leather that he tanned himself. He managed to obtain sufficient profits that allowed him to acquire real estate that he currently owns.

He continued exporting for several years and although there were middlemen who bought the product, they paid very well, he said. In that time, he met a friend that lived in the United States and came every year to buy him Q1,000.00 worth of leather products from him. The minimum she would buy was Q500.00, for the time it was a lot of money. The sales of that time were so good that he had to work harder than usual to meet the demand for product sales as everything was sold out. The products that were elaborated for exportation were cases for knives of different sizes, fine embroidery cases, girths of which he produced 1,000 in one month.



José Eliseo Santos Changquin sews a cowboy style girth.

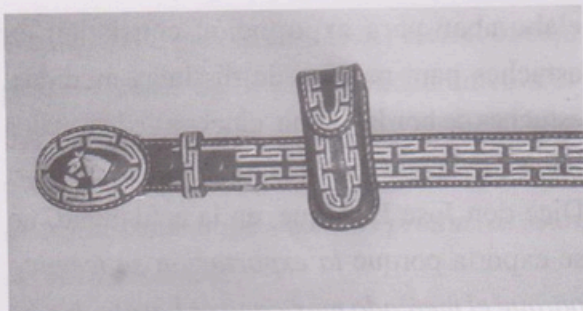
Don José Luis says that currently there is no more exportation because, the exportation ended because the Mexican market is cheap, machine made and is not a craft but an industrial job. We cannot compete with price, not with quality because ours is better. It could be possible, but I would have to go to the United States because I was given a multiple visa to be able to travel at any time, but I was never able to travel. The embassy attaché Mr. Aguirre came here and told me that he could help me so that I could travel to the United States and buy machinery to export the products. But a lot of money was needed, and I do not have any son which is an important factor, it is necessary for someone in the family to be involved in the same job to make progress.

### Current production

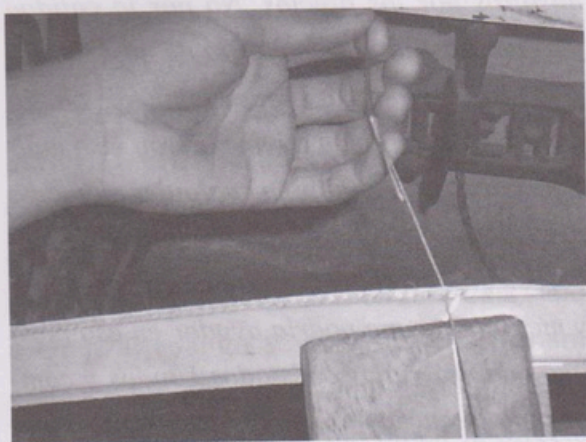
Currently, don José Luis produces saddles of different types: cowboy, Mexican and Texan style saddles for horse parades, leather backrests for cars and girths in different styles. The most sold product, and therefore the most produced, is the cowboy-style girth.

He explains that saddles and girths are in almost equal demand. The problem with the girth is that despite investing few economic resources in it, the profit is lower. In exchange, with saddles the investment is higher, but they are always sold, and more profit is obtained.





A girth and a knife holder, hand-made and hand-embroidered at don José Luis' workshop.



Fernando Fauricio Gómez hands who is 15 years old and makes girths and has worked in the workshop since he was 9 years old.

The products that are indispensable in a saddlery sales room are saddles, different style girths and car backrests. There are also some other products made at a saddlery sales room and are well sold like gun holsters, penknife cases, wallets, leather hats, keychains, Bible covers and any other item that can be made from leather.

All these accessories, according to don José Luis, end up filling the business.

He says that the master saddler is always learning to do new things, there are different materials, different ways and you can never learn all because the work is very vast.



Bible covers made of leather.

Usually, don José Luis gets up at five in the morning to supervise the work in his workshop. Every day he goes to his farm to check on the state of his cattle and to see the corn crops, then he checks the tanning of the hides in his tannery and the saddlery tasks. Additionally, with his daughter Edna, he has a broiler chicken partnership that is sold and consumed locally.

The importance of the "Del Sur" saddlery is that Don José Luis has managed, in addition to developing the handcrafted work, to set up a tannery where he tans the hides, he needs for his production.

"Del Sur No. 3" saddlery is distributed as follows: in the front, a sales room, then a large room where the workshop is installed where leather crafts are made, then the home of the master saddler Don José Luis.

Behind the house there is a courtyard with a chicken coop for raising broiler chickens and, at the back of the property, there are the leather tannery facilities with the drum, drying area and leather washing piles.



Master José Luis Morales Carbajal's workshop sales room.

Currently, in the tanning process, machinery is used to reduce the tanning time and to be able to produce more hides than in the manual process. For this purpose, it has a fulling drum, which is a cylinder-shaped machine for beating hides, similar to rotating drums in which the energetic removal of the hides in the presence of tanning materials considerably reduces the time required to complete the tanning process.

The most important thing is that the hides to be tanned are in optimum condition and clean. In addition, they should not be exposed to the elements for long periods of time to avoid decomposition, since they are raw hides. To obtain good results, it is necessary that the animal has been slaughtered at the slaughterhouse.

At the slaughterhouse, the cattle are washed before slaughter and, consequently, when the skin is removed, it comes out clean. Care should be taken not to tear it. On the other hand, if the animal is butchered in the field, it is not washed before slaughter and the hide is full of dirt and filth.

To prevent the leather from decomposing, it is immediately salted and stored. The salt preserves it and does not allow the hair to fall out. Subsequently, they are tanned in the lime tanks and then in the drum, where the process takes about 20 hours. Finally, they are ironed with wooden wedges that are used to polish the leather, remove wrinkles and give it shine. Finally, the leather is beaten with a *club* to make it soft, loose and ready to be worked<sup>1</sup>.



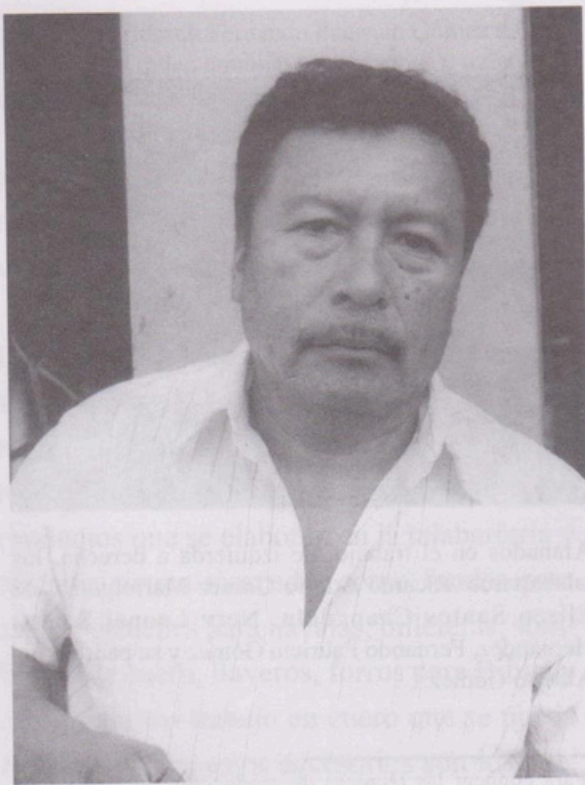
At work, from left to right, the saddlers: Ricardo Adolfo Gómez Marroquín, José Eliseo Santos Changquín, Nery Leonel Santos Hernández, Fernando Fauricio Gómez and his father, Luis Alberto Gómez.

To learn about the production techniques of saddlery and tannery work, see Esquivel Vásquez Aracely "Artesanías de cuero del municipio de Taxisco, Santa Rosa, pages 123 to 150 in Tradiciones de Guatemala, No. 47-1997 Centro de Estudios Folklóricos USAC Guatemala.



Don José Luis has only five workers. Four of them work in the workshop of the "Del Sur No. 2" saddlery and one in the tannery. He is familiar with the production process, as the tannery is made by the drum and machinery, which reduces costs and production time.

In the saddlery, Don José Luis' work consists of cutting the hides, supervising all the work so that the products are well made, providing the supplies and tools needed to work, repairing any piece that presents problems to make production effective, delivering any required order and attending to the business when there is an emergency. He considers it important that his products are of good quality, that is why he consciously supervises that his workers have the needed inputs to produce with good quality.



Master José Luis Morales Carbajal, an outstanding craftsman in the art of saddlery and tannery.

His workers learned saddlery and tanning trades in his workshop. In addition, he has two students who come to work in his workshop during the vacation season. Next year, these young people will graduate, one as a physical education teacher and the other as an elementary school teacher.

According to him, many professionals have come out of his business. Some are based in the United States and others are in Guatemala. *I have taken out good groups of boys who have benefited a lot from what they learned in saddlery to continue their studies.*



Detailed process of threading the needle for sewing girths.

### Commercialization

The commercialization of their handicrafts takes place in the sales room they have. The styles of saddles he produces are Texan, Mexican, and cowboy, and he also makes them embroidered or embellished.

The highest priced are those of Texan styles that have a value of Q 3,000.00. Car backrests are sold at Q 200.00; knife holders are sold at Q 25.00; holsters for firearms of various sizes are sold at Q 125.00 for large ones, Q 100.00 for medium ones and Q 75.00 for small ones; machete scabbards at Q 75.00 for the large and Q 50.00 for the small; the hats are made in three styles depending on the taste of the person and the sale prices are Q 200.00, Q 150.00 and Q 125.00.

Mr. José Luis believes that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States and the countries of Central America and the Caribbean will bring benefits to merchants because *sales will improve even if they say what they want because there will be the right to compete wherever you want and there you are going to show who is the one who can and who really wants to work.* Don José Luis affirms that *for me that is one of the greatest achievements of small countries like ours.* He believes that *Guatemala is a poor and backward country that does not have greater access to technology, which should be a priority for the government because technology is what we are going to live on and if we do not have updated technology in our country we are lost. This is the only way for the country to have new entrepreneurs and new industrial producers with good technology. Because if this is not done, we will always live as employees of large companies.*

For this reason, Don José Luis believes that *China is of great importance for Guatemala, because they have brought, through the maquilas, their industry, which is a cheaper technological advance with which they produce more than many advanced countries, including the United States.*

*These countries are lagging behind, because the Chinese come to make things cheaper, more practical and, in addition, they do everything well, and that would be the great impact that an FTA with China would have.*

He indicated that if the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Central America and the Caribbean (FTA) enters into force, he is interested in requesting a loan from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA), which has a loan project to help small producers. He has previously worked with small loans but now wants to apply for a larger loan. The loans granted by this ministry charge an annual interest rate of 4.5%. As collateral for the loan approval, he will mortgage part of his farm in order to use the money to buy an *ironing machine* for the tannery and materials to work in the saddlery.

### Tributes

Personally, Mr. José Luis says that there are people who have congratulated him on the work he does and have given him some gifts, such as Mr. Gonzalo Montiel, to whom he did some work and who has remained a friend and always comes by to greet him and congratulate him for his excellent work. Mr. Aquino, who was at the Guatemalan embassy in the United States and supported him in his exports, has also recognized his work. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's advisor for Central America presented him with gifts and sent him magazines with leather products to adapt them to his environment.



These are some of the tributes, but the most complete tribute to the saddlers of Taxisco, was the exhibition - sale: leather, cowhide and saddles, which was established in the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos of the USAC, coordinated by the researcher of this life story, where they were made a catalog and shared with the highest authorities of the San Carlos de Guatemala University.

Finally, the researcher, in charge of the Area of Popular Arts and Crafts of the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos of the San Carlos de Guatemala University, through this biography, values and recognizes the life, work and sacrifices of a saddler from Taxisco, department of Santa Rosa, Mr. José Luis Morales Carbajal, who has excelled in the art of saddlery and tanning of his own leather and has developed a popular industry in the region with a spirit of entrepreneurship, aimed at seeking with optimism, a growth of its business that allows it to compete nationally and internationally, within the process of globalization of the economy in which Guatemala is immersed.

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