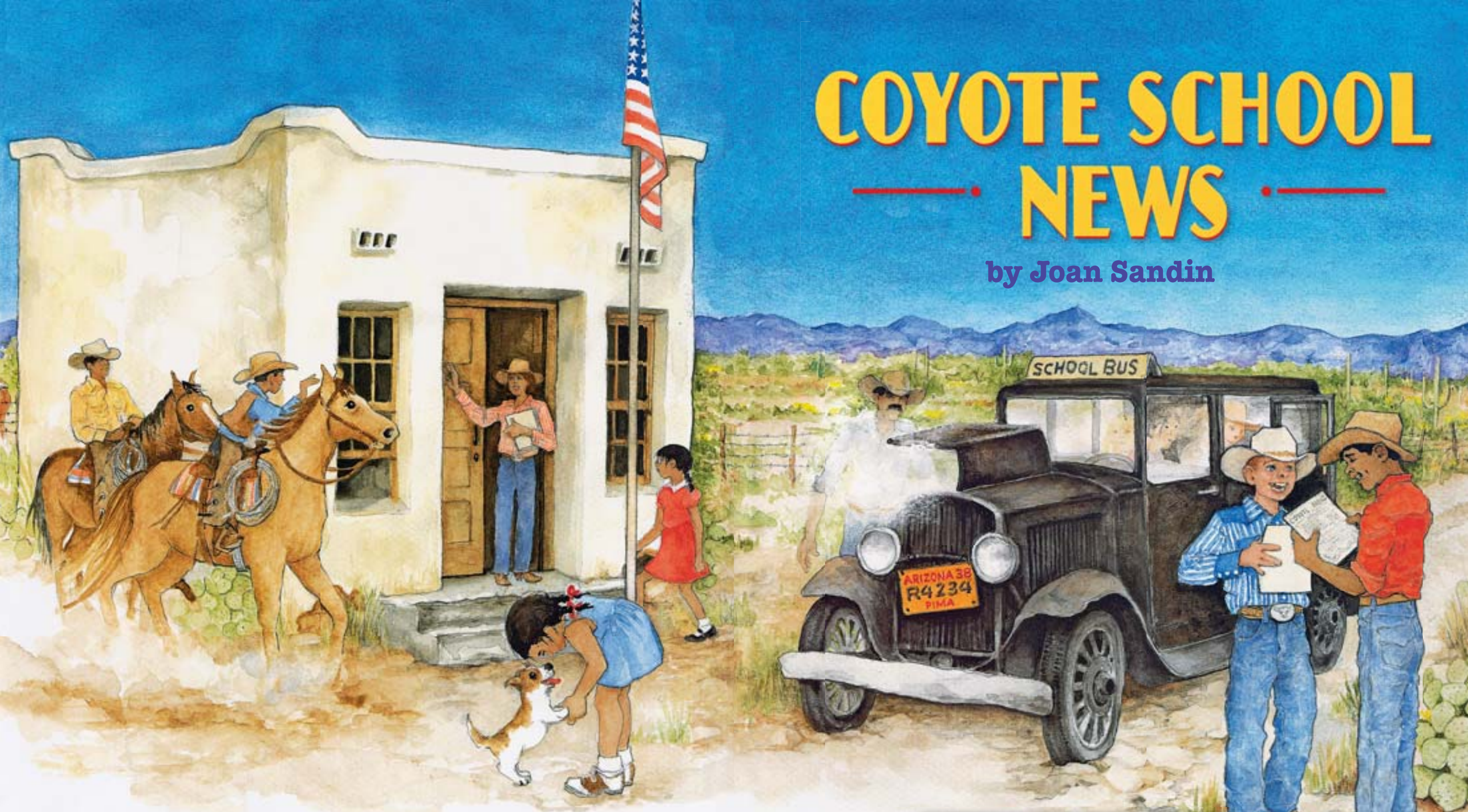


# COYOTE SCHOOL NEWS

by Joan Sandin



## Genre

**Historical fiction** is a story that is made up around real events in history. Decide what those real events might have been as you read about children in a southern Arizona country school in 1938–1939.



Question of the Week

**How can we work together to achieve a goal?**

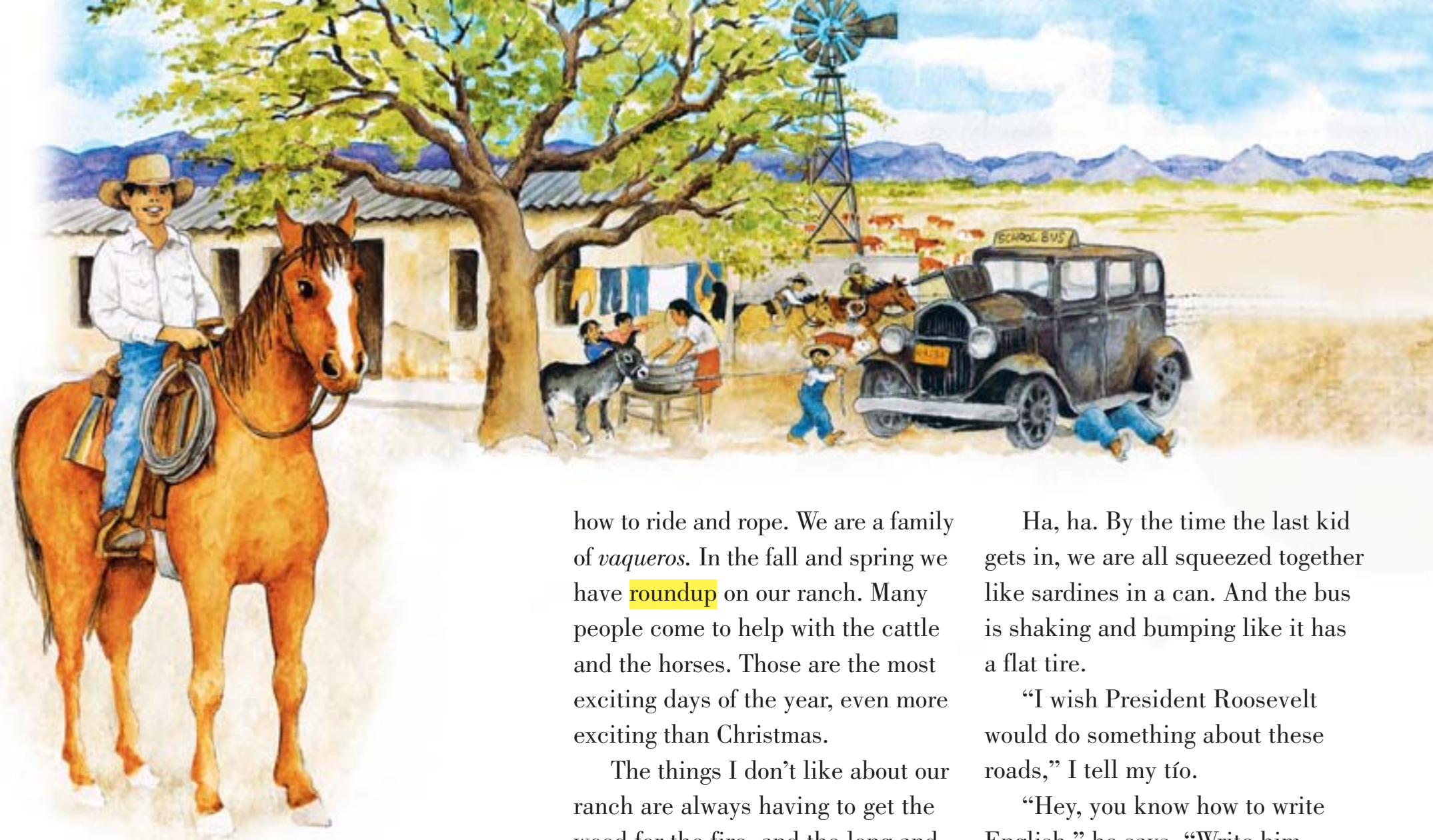


## Rancho San Isidro



**M**y name is Ramón Ernesto Ramírez, but everybody calls me Monchi. I live on a ranch that my great-grandfather built a long time ago when this land was part of Mexico. That was before the United States bought it and moved the line in 1854. My father has a joke about that. He says my great-grandfather was an *americano*, not because he crossed the line, but because the line crossed him.

In my family we are six kids: me, my big brother Junior, my big sister Natalia, my little tattletale brother Victor, my little sister Loli, and the baby Pili. My *tío* Chaco lives with us too. He is the youngest brother of my father.



The real name of our ranch is Rancho San Isidro, after the patron saint of my great-grandfather, but most of the time everybody calls it the Ramírez Ranch.

On our ranch we have chickens and pigs and cattle and horses. The boys in the Ramírez family know

how to ride and rope. We are a family of *vaqueros*. In the fall and spring we have **roundup** on our ranch. Many people come to help with the cattle and the horses. Those are the most exciting days of the year, even more exciting than Christmas.

The things I don't like about our ranch are always having to get the wood for the fire, and the long and bumpy ride to school.

My *tío* Chaco drives the school bus.

"It's not fair," I tell him. "We have to get up earlier than all the other kids at **Coyote** School, and we get home the latest too."

"Don't forget," says my *tío*, "you get first choice of seats."

Ha, ha. By the time the last kid gets in, we are all squeezed together like sardines in a can. And the bus is shaking and bumping like it has a flat tire.

"I wish President Roosevelt would do something about these roads," I tell my *tío*.

"Hey, you know how to write English," he says. "Write him a letter."

"Maybe I will," I say.



*americano* (AH-mair-ee-CAHN-oh)—  
American  
*tío* (TEE-oh)—uncle  
*rancho* (RAHN-choe)—ranch  
*san* (sahn)—saint  
*vaqueros* (bah-CARE-rose)—cowboys



## Coyote School

“*Mira, mira, Monchi,*” Natalia says, pinching my cheek. “There’s your little *novia.*”

She means Rosie. I like Rosie, but I hate it when Natalia teases me. Rosie lives at Coyote Ranch, close enough to school that she can walk. Always she waits by the road so she can race the bus.

“*¡Ándale! ¡Ándale!* Hurry up!” we yell at my tío Chaco, but every time he lets her win.

Rosie wasn’t first today anyway. Lalo and Frankie were. Their horses are standing in the shade of the big mesquite tree.

*Yap! Yap! Yap!* Always Chipito barks when he sees us, and Miss

Byers says, “Hush, Chipito!” Then she smiles and waves at us.

Miss Byers is new this year. Her ranch is a hundred miles from here, in Rattlesnake Canyon, so five days of the week she and Chipito live in the little room behind the school. All of us like Miss Byers, even the big kids, because she is young and nice and fair. We like that she lives on a ranch, and we like her swell ideas:

1. Baseball at recess,
2. The Perfect Attendance Award,
3. *Coyote News*.

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*mira* (MEER-ah)—look

*novia* (NOVE-ee-ah)—girlfriend

*ándale* (AHN-dah-lay)—come on; hurry up

## Coyote News

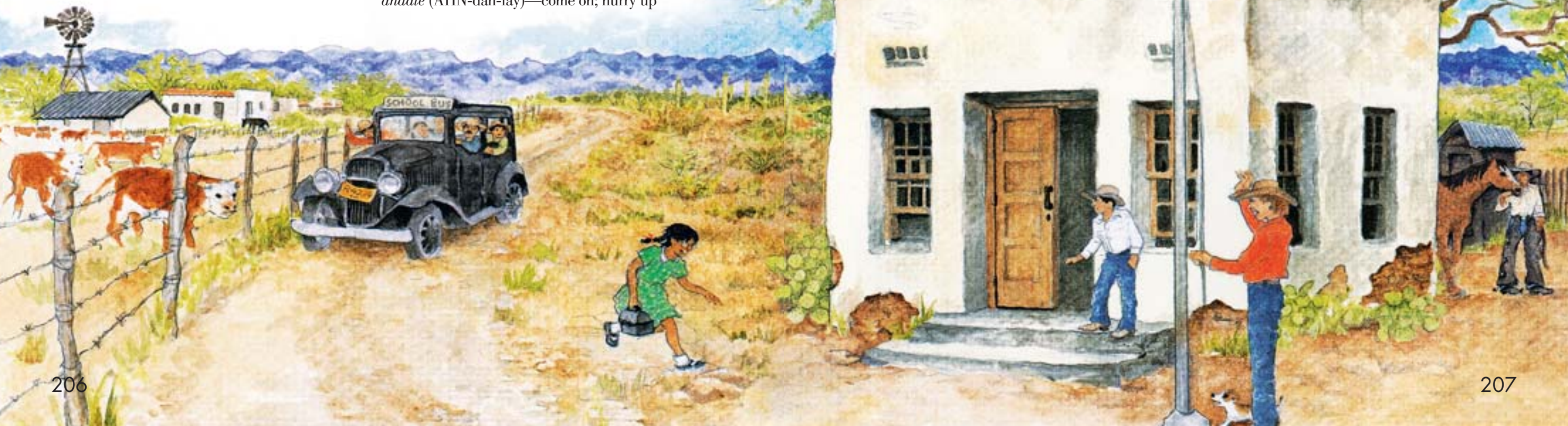
All week we have been working on our first *Coyote News*. Natalia made up the name, and Joey drew the coyote. First we looked at some other newspapers: the *Arizona Daily Star*, *Western Livestock Journal*, and *Little Cowpuncher*. That one we liked best because all the stories and pictures were done by kids.

“Monchi,” said Loli, “put me cute.”

“What?” I said. Sometimes it’s not easy to understand my little sister’s English.

“Miss Byers says you have to help me put words to my story,” she said.

“Okay,” I told her. “But I have my own story to do, so hurry up and learn to write.”





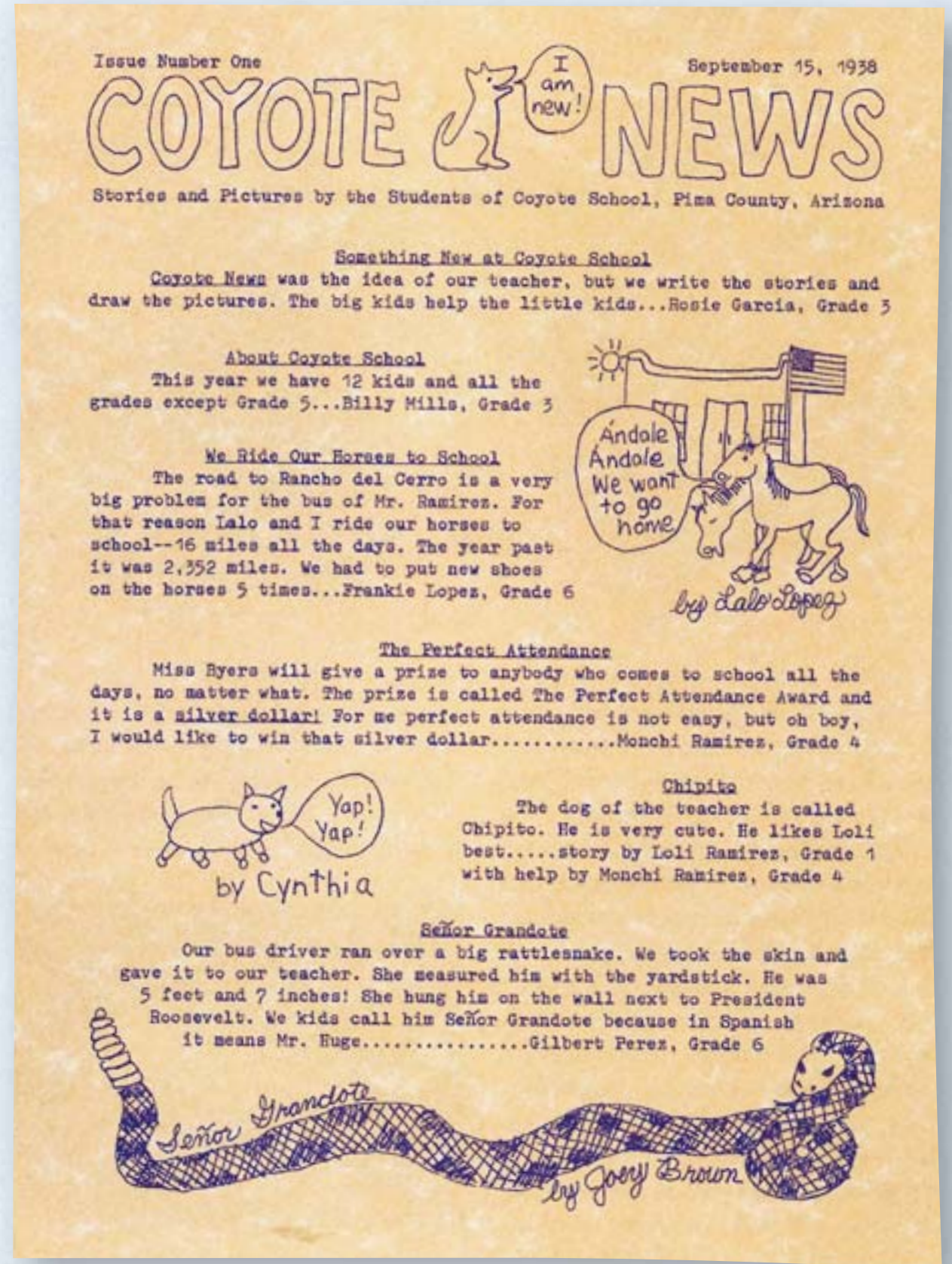
Loli's story was *muy tonta*, but one thing was good. She remembered how to write all the words I spelled for her.

Even if Victor is my brother, I have to say he is a big tattletale—*chismoso*. When Gilbert was writing his story for *Coyote News*, Victor told on him for writing in Spanish. But Miss Byers did not get mad at Gilbert. She smiled at him! And then she said Spanish is a beautiful language that people around here have been speaking for hundreds of years, and that we should be proud we can speak it too!

Ha ha, Victor, you big *chismoso*! When we finished our stories and pictures, Miss Byers cut a stencil for the mimeograph. Then she printed copies of *Coyote News* for us to take home, and we hung them up on the ceiling to dry the ink. My tío Chaco said it looked like laundry day at Coyote School.



*muy* (MOO-ee)—very  
*tonta* (TONE-tah)—silly  
*chismoso* (cheese-MOE-soe)—tattletale  
*señor* (sin-YORE)—Mr.  
*grandote* (grahn-DOE-tay)—great, big, huge





## Chiles



Every day I am asking my father when we will have roundup. He says I am making him *loco* with my nagging and that first we have to pick *todos los chiles*.

All of us kids are tired of picking the chiles. It doesn't matter that we get home late from school, we still have to do it. And then, before the chiles dry out, we have to string them to make the *sartas*.

Last night we were taking about 600 pounds of the chiles to my tío Enrique's ranch. I was in the back of the truck when it hit a big rock.

All the heavy sacks fell on me. Oh boy, it hurt so much! But I did not

tell my father. He had told me not to ride in the back of the truck, and I was afraid he would be mad.

My hand was still hurting this morning when Miss Byers did Fingernail Inspection.

"Monchi," she said, "what happened to your wrist? It's all black-and-blue and swollen."

"The chiles fell on him," Victor told her. "My father told him not to ride in the back."

"¡Chismoso!" I hissed at him.

Miss Byers called my tío Chaco over, and they had a long talk.

"Back in the bus, *mi'jo*," my tío said. "I have to take you to Tucson."

"Tucson!" I said. "Why?"

"You got to see the doctor," he said. So we drove all the way to Tucson to my tía Lena's house. At first my aunt was surprised and happy to see us, but then my tío told her why we were there.

"Monchi!" my tía said. "¡Pobrecito!" Then she told my tío Chaco to go back with the bus and she would take care of me.

My tía took me to a doctor. He moved my hand around. It hurt when he did that.

"I'm afraid the wrist is broken," he told my tía. "I need to set it and put it in a cast."

So I got a cast of plaster on my arm, and I had to stay in Tucson. But for me that was no problem! My tía felt very sorry for me. She cooked

my favorite foods, and I got to pick the stations on her radio. That night Miss Byers called on the telephone to ask about me. She said she would come early Monday morning to drive me to school.

On Sunday my tía took me to the Tarzan picture show at the Fox Theater. It was swell! After the show we got ice cream and walked around downtown to look in the windows of the stores. I saw many things I liked. The best was a silver buckle with a hole to put a silver dollar. *¡Ay caramba!* I wish I had a buckle like that.



*loco* (LOW-coe)—crazy  
*todos* (TOE-dose)—all  
*los* (lohs)—the  
*chiles* (CHEE-less)—chile peppers  
*sartas* (SAR-tahs)—strings of chile peppers  
*mi'jo* (MEE-hoe)—my son, sonny  
*tía* (TEE-ah)—aunt  
*pobrecito* (pobe-ray-SEE-toe)—  
poor little thing  
*¡ay caramba!* (EYE car-RAHM-bah)—  
oh boy!





## Nochebuena

For *Nochebuena* we are many people. Some are family I see only at Christmas and roundup and weddings and funerals. The day before Nochebuena my cousins from Sonora arrived. Now we could make the *piñata*!

First we cut the strips of red, white, and green paper. Then we paste them on a big *olla*. When the *piñata* is ready, we give it to my mother to fill with the *dulces* she hides in her secret places.

On Nochebuena, Junior and my tío Chaco hung the *piñata* between

two big mesquite trees and we kids lined up to hit it, the littlest ones first. My mother tied a *mascada* over my little brother Pili's eyes and my tía Lena turned him around and around. She gave him the stick and pointed him toward the *piñata*. My tío Chaco and Junior made it easy for him. They did not jerk on the rope when he swung.

“¡Dale! ¡Dale!” we were yelling, but Pili never came close. None of the little kids could hit it. Then it was Loli's turn.

*BAM.*

Some peanuts fell out. Gilbert and I dived to get them. One by one, the other kids tried and missed. Then it was Natalia's turn. She took a good swing and—*BAM.*

The *piñata* broke open, and all the kids were in the dirt, screaming and laughing and picking up gum and nuts and oranges and candies.



Just before midnight we got into my tío Chaco's bus and my father's pickup to go to the Mass at Amado. When we got home my mother and my tías put out *tamales* and *menudo* and *tortillas* and cakes and coffee and other drinks. We had music and

dancing. Nobody told us we had to go to bed.

Sometime in the night Santa Claus came and gave us our presents. Junior got a pair of **spurs**, Victor got a big red top, and Loli got a little toy dog that looks like Chipito. But I got the best present. It was a silver-dollar buckle, the one I had seen with my tía Lena in Tucson. It doesn't have a dollar yet, only a hole, but when I win the Perfect Attendance I will put my silver dollar in that hole.



*Nochebuena* (NO-chay-BUAY-nah)—  
Christmas Eve  
*piñata* (peen-YAH-tah)—clay pot (*olla*)  
filled with treats  
*olla* (OY-yah)—clay pot  
*dulces* (DOOL-sehss)—sweets, candy  
*mascada* (mas-KAH-dah)—scarf  
*¡dale!* (DAH-lay)—hit it!  
*tamales* (tah-MAH-less)—steamed,  
filled dough  
*menudo* (men-OO-doe)—tripe soup  
*tortillas* (tor-TEE-yahs)—flat Mexican bread



# COYOTE NEWS

Stories and Pictures by the Students of Coyote School, Pima County, Arizona



### Miss Byers' Radio

Miss Byers brought her new radio to school. It has a big battery, so it doesn't matter that Coyote School has no electricity. We got to hear President Roosevelt's speech to the Congress. He told them to be prepared for war. Then he said, "Happy New Year.".....Monchi Ramirez, Grade 4

### Our President



by Joey Brown

### Our President's Voice

None of us kids had heard the President's voice before. When he said "war" it sounded like "waw." We were all laughing because we never heard anybody who talked like that, but Billy said some of the **dudes** do.....Rosie Garcia, Grade 3

### Some Noisy Children

When the President was talking, Loli was noisy. Miss Byers gave her peanuts to make her quiet. I was quiet without the peanuts...Victor, Grade 2

### Music on the Radio

We got to listen to the music on Miss Byers' radio. She has many stations, but I liked best to hear the one with the rancheras.....Gilbert Perez, Grade 6



By Frankie Lopez

### No Earrings for Christmas

Santa Claus didn't bring me any earrings. Loli says it's because he knows that I don't have any holes in my ears like she does.....Cynthia Brown, Grade 2

### The Perfect Attendance Report

Miss Byers says Santa Claus must have given some of our kids the flu and chicken pox for Christmas. The only kids who still have perfect attendance are Natalia, Monchi, Victor, and me.....Billy Mills, Grade 3

### La Fiesta de los Vaqueros Rodeo Parade

We are so excited because Miss Byers just told us something wonderful. Our school gets to be in the Tucson Rodeo Parade!...Natalia Ramirez, Grade 8

## Roundup!

The vaqueros were hollering, "¡Ándale! ¡Ándale!" They were cutting through the cattle on their horses, swinging their lassoes in the air to rope out the steers. My tío Chaco threw his saddle up on his horse, Canelo, and joined them. We kids clapped and whistled. Sometimes we helped my father or my tíos. We brought them rope or a fresh horse or something to drink.

That night we boys got to eat with the vaqueros and sit by the fire and listen to them play their guitars and sing their *rancheras*. We got to hear their exciting stories and their bragging and their bad words. When my father came over to Junior and me, I thought he was going to tell us to go in to bed, but instead he said, "Tomorrow I want you boys to help with the branding." Junior had helped since he was eleven, but it

was the first time my father had ever asked me.

"Tomorrow I have school," I said.

"School!" said Junior. "Monchi, don't you understand? You get to help with the branding!"

"He doesn't want to lose the Perfect Attendance," said Victor.

"The Perfect Attendance!" said Junior. "Monchi, you are crazier than a goat. You are a Ramírez. We are a family of vaqueros. Roundup is more important than the Perfect Attendance."

I knew Junior was right, but I touched the empty hole of my silver-dollar buckle and I sighed. *Adiós*, Perfect Attendance.

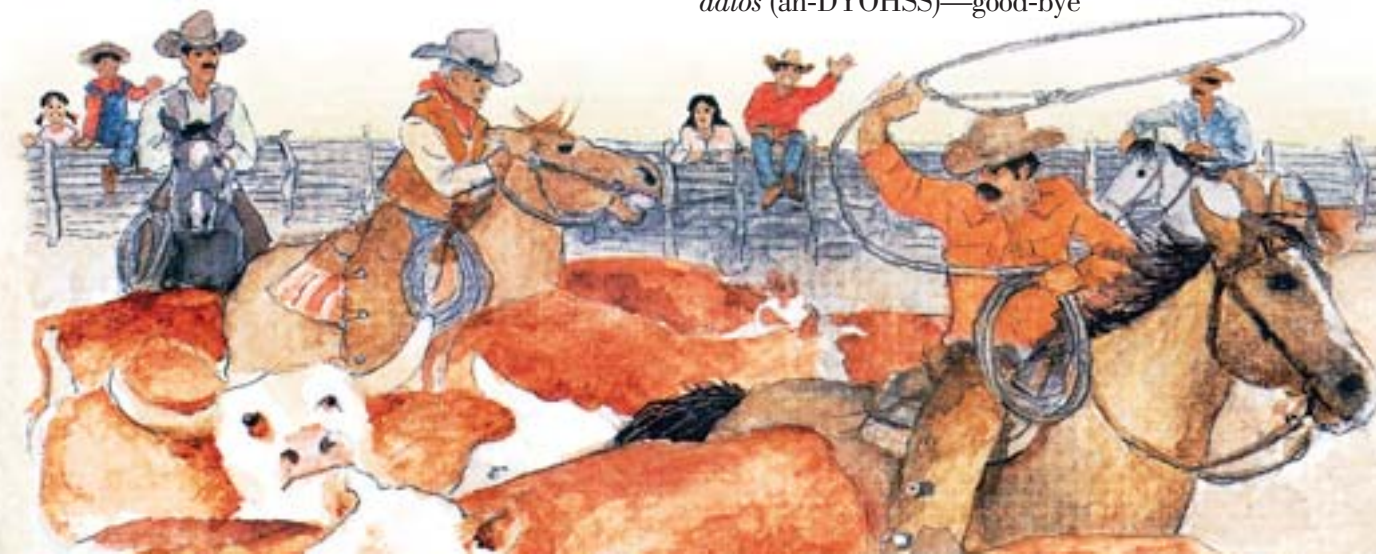


*rancheras* (rahn-CHAIR-ahs)—Mexican folk songs

*fiesta* (fee-ESS-tah)—party, celebration

*de* (day)—of

*adiós* (ah-DYOHSS)—good-bye





For two exciting days Junior and I helped with the roundup. First the vaqueros lassoed the calves and wrestled them down to the ground. Then Junior and I held them while my father and my tío Enrique branded them and cut the ears and gave them the shot.

¡Qué barullo! The red-hot irons were smoking, and the burned hair was stinking. The calves were fighting and **bawling** like giant babies. They were much heavier than Junior and me. It was hard work and dangerous to hold them down. I got dust in my eyes and in my nose, but I didn't care.

After the work of the roundup was over, we made the fiesta! First was a race for the kids. We had to ride as fast as we could to the chuck wagon, take an orange, and ride back again. Junior won on Pinto. He got a big jar of candies and gave

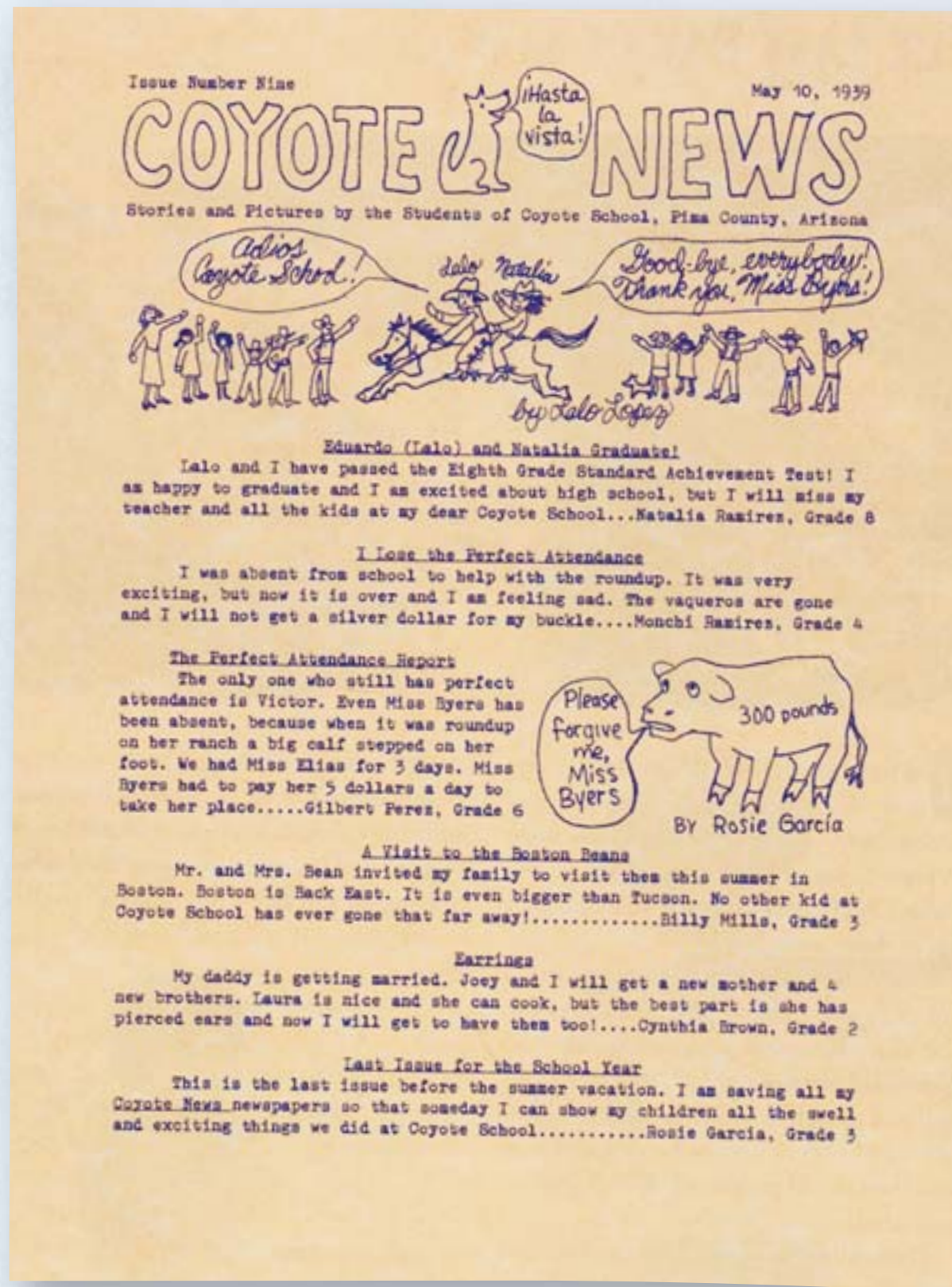
some to all of us. Last came Victor and his little *burro*. All that day we had races and roping contests.

That night we had a big *barbacoa*. The kids got cold soda pops. When the music started, all the vaqueros wanted to dance with Natalia. The one they call Chapo asked her to be his novia, but Natalia told him she doesn't want to get married. She wants to go to high school.

Monday morning when we left for school, the vaqueros were packing their bedrolls. We waved and hollered from our bus, "¡Adiós! ¡Adiós! ¡Hasta la vista!"

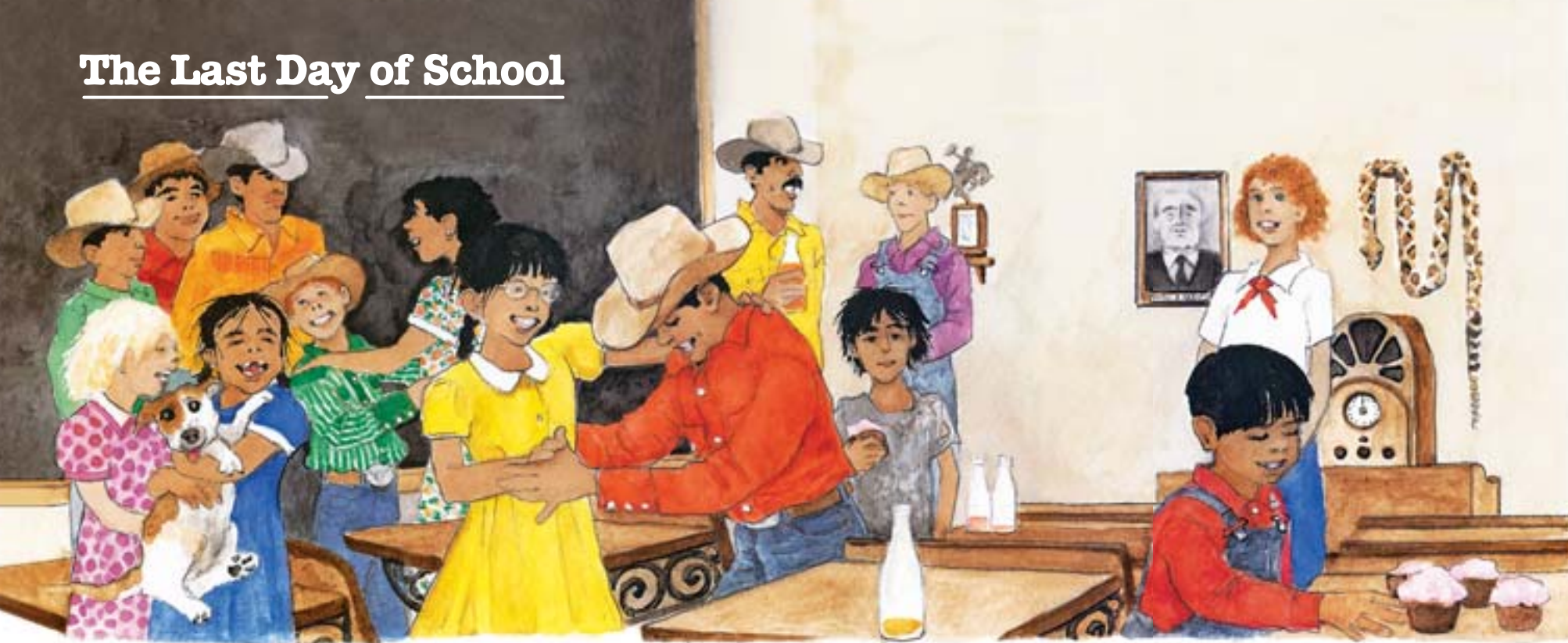


*qué* (kaye)—what, how  
*barullo* (bah-ROO-yoe)—noise, racket  
*burro* (BOOR-row)—donkey  
*barbacoa* (bar-bah-KOH-ah)—barbecue  
*hasta la vista* (AH-stah lah VEE-stah)—see you





## The Last Day of School



On the last day of school Miss Byers gave us a fiesta with cupcakes and candies and Cracker Jacks and soda pops. We got to listen to Mexican music on her radio. I didn't have to dance with Natalia. I got to dance with Rosie.

Then Miss Byers turned off the radio and stood in the front of the room between President Roosevelt and Señor Grandote. She called Natalia and Lalo up to the front and told them how proud we were that they were graduates of Coyote School, and how much we would miss them. We all clapped and whistled.

Next, Miss Byers gave Edelia a paper and said, "Please read what it says, Edelia."

Edelia read: "Edelia Ortiz has been promoted to Grade Two." Miss Byers had to help her to read "promoted," but we all clapped and cheered anyway. Edelia looked very happy and proud.

Then Miss Byers asked Victor to come to the front of the room, and I knew what that meant. I didn't want to listen when she said how good it was that he had not missed a day of school, and I didn't want to look when she gave him the silver dollar. I knew I should be

happy that Victor won the Perfect Attendance, but I was not.

"And now, boys and girls," Miss Byers said, "it's time for the next award."

"What next award?" we asked.

"The *Coyote News* Writing Award for the student who has contributed most to *Coyote News* by writing his own stories and by helping others write theirs. The winner of the *Coyote News* Writing Award is Ramón Ernesto Ramírez."

"Me?" I said.

All the kids were clapping and whistling. I just sat there.

"Go up to the front," Natalia said and gave me a push.

Miss Byers smiled and shook my hand. "Congratulations, Monchi," she said, and then she gave me the award.

¡Ay caramba! The *Coyote News* Writing Award was a shiny silver dollar!

"Oh thank you, Miss Byers!" I said. "¡Gracias!" I was so surprised and happy. I pushed the silver dollar into the round hole on my buckle. It fit perfectly!

"¡Muy hermosa!" Miss Byers said.

She was right. It was very beautiful.



*gracias* (GRAHS-see-ahs)—thank you  
*hermosa* (air-MOE-sah)—beautiful

