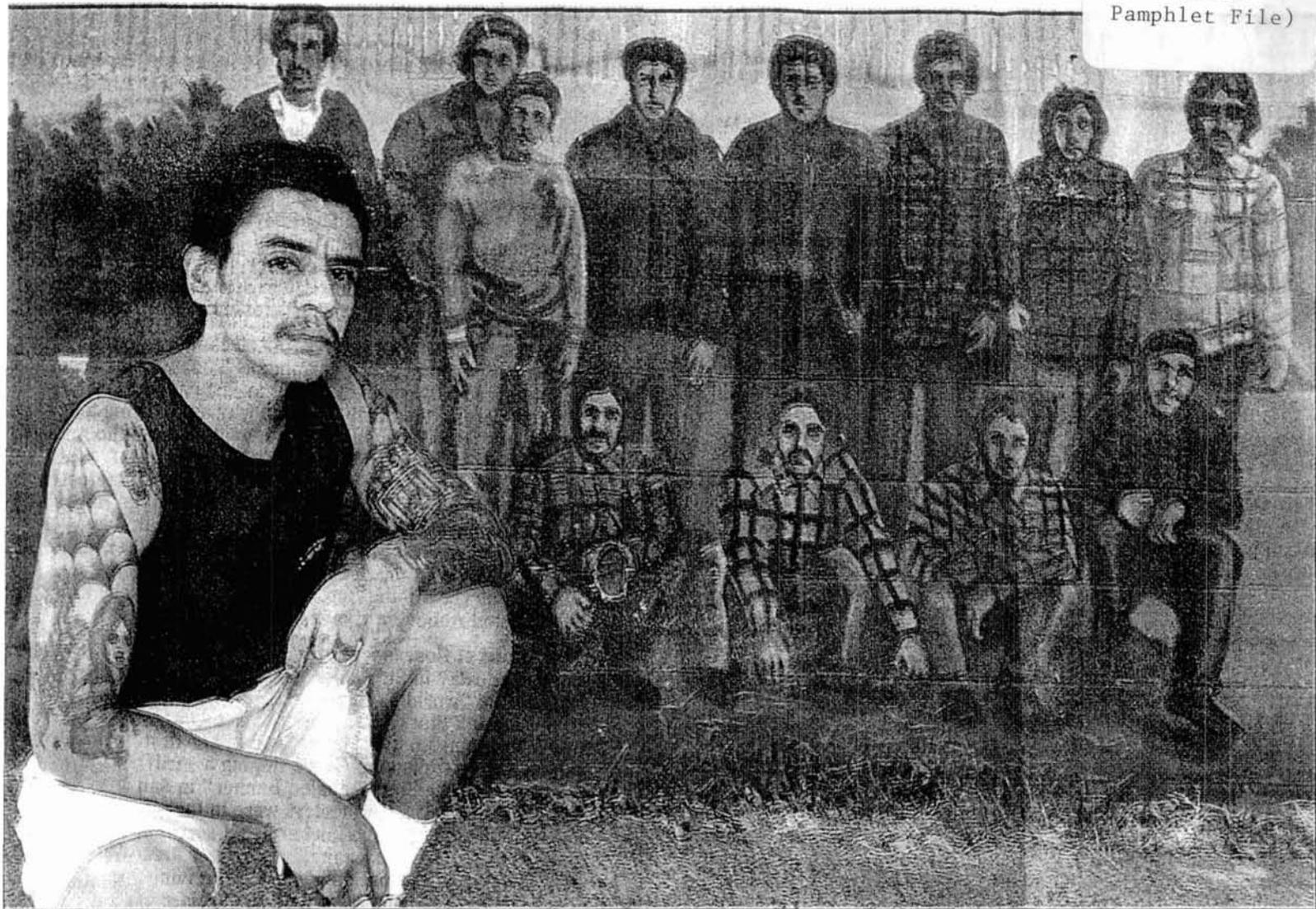


# Gang hatred: the first seeds

Gangs

ORANGE COUNTY  
(Reference  
Pamphlet File)



Bill Alkofer/The Orange County Register

Robert Quintana loved being a Big Stanton gang member until he got to prison. A bullet in the wall behind him came from a drive-by shooting.

## Barrios' rivalry began with sports, cars

O.C. Register - 8-6-90

"Two households, both alike in dignity, from ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean."

— William Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet"

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

A group of youths in barrio La Colonia Independencia sought refuge from the afternoon heat in the shade of a Garza Avenue porch in Anaheim.

"You talk to those guys in Stanton? They act all bad, but they're all talk," said Johnny, 16, who

had VLCR — an acronym for Varrio La Colonia Rules — etched on his knuckles.

A mile west on Katella Avenue on a Rose Street porch, a similar group of youths who call themselves Big Stanton echoed their rival gang.

"La Colonia think they're bad, but they only know how to flash guns," a curly-haired 16-year-old named Mario said.

Since the 1930s, the barrio youths of La Colonia and Big Stanton have been trying to outdo one another. The rivalry was forged on baseball fields, moved to fashionable cars and clothes

and for the past two decades has focused on drugs, guns and killings — including the recent gang slayings of two teen-agers.

And despite all the grieving, all the efforts of barrio residents, police and community programs, no one has been able to answer the question: When will it all end?

Those growing up in La Colonia and Big Stanton today have more in common — their Mexican heritage, previous generations who labored together in the fields of Orange County and a common lifestyle — than most young people growing up in Orange County

neighborhoods.

Instead of sparking kinship and camaraderie, those similarities have fueled bitter fighting and bloodshed.

"How do you take a kid and tell them to not do what their parents, grandparents, uncles and cousins have done?" asked Colleen Hodges, director of the gang violence suppression unit of the Orange County Probation Department. "It's almost impossible."

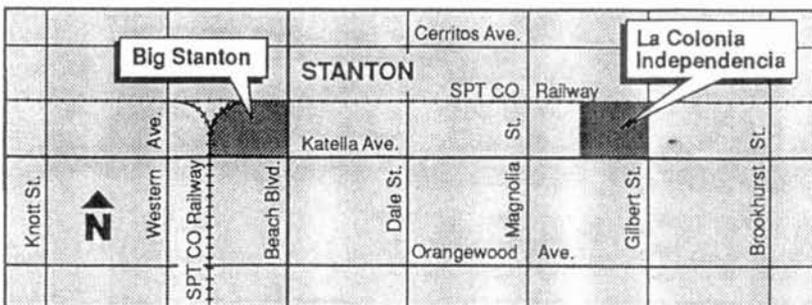
In April, the long-standing violence once again escalated.

Rosendo Ibarra, 17, who police said belonged to the La Colonia

Please see GANG/10

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The Orange County Register

## GANGS: Bitter rivalry began with sports, car competition

FROM 1

gang, was gunned down as he talked to his girlfriend from a pay phone on Katella Avenue. Police believe Ibarra was killed in revenge for the wounding of a Stanton gang member weeks earlier.

In July, Johnny Casillas Jr., 16, was brought down by gunfire as he strolled home from a party several blocks from his grandmother's Stanton home.

Friends and relatives said it was a revenge killing for Ibarra's death, even though the boy was not a gang member.



Competition between the barrios began as early as the 1930s, when both were islands in a sea of orchards, recalled Lupe Guadan, 62, who grew up in La Colonia.

"We were surrounded by orange groves, nothing but orange groves," she said. "It was peaceful then. Nobody was afraid."

Lupe Guadan, Rosendo Ibarra's aunt, said Orange County had many barrios then and each had a baseball team. On weekends, they settled their differences on the diamond.

Pete, 67, Lupe's husband, was one of La Colonia's best pitchers.

"I could throw a rising fastball, sinker, curve, change-up, and floater," said Pete Guadan, once a powerful right-hander.

To Domingo Avalos, 74, baseball was a brief reprieve from laboring in the fields from dawn to dusk.

"There was no time for fooling around then," said Avalos, who has lived in La Colonia all his life.

Barrio life was interrupted by World War II, when most of the men went off to fight in Europe and the Pacific.

When they returned in 1946, many became "pachucos," donning the baggy zoot suits and driving the flashy cars of that era.

"We used to outdress each other then, or we tried to see who had a sharper looking car," recalled Juan Ontiveros, 64, who waxed

nostalgic about his green 1929 Chevy with black vinyl roof. "We tried to out-style each other."

Eventually, the barrios formed rival car clubs.

La Colonia called themselves the Los Inocentes de Katella; in Stanton, it was the Latin Gents.

Jose Quintana remembers that the competition sometimes escalated into brawls when rival members met at dance halls and fiestas. The fights often were to prove which barrio was better. Sometimes the fights were over women.

Sporadic feuding between the car clubs continued into the 1950s as the surrounding orange orchards slowly gave way to housing tracts and strip malls.

Longtime residents say the feuding turned bloody in the 1960s.

Drugs and guns became more available in the barrios as Orange County assumed a more urban character. Feuds increasingly were settled with bullets instead of fists.

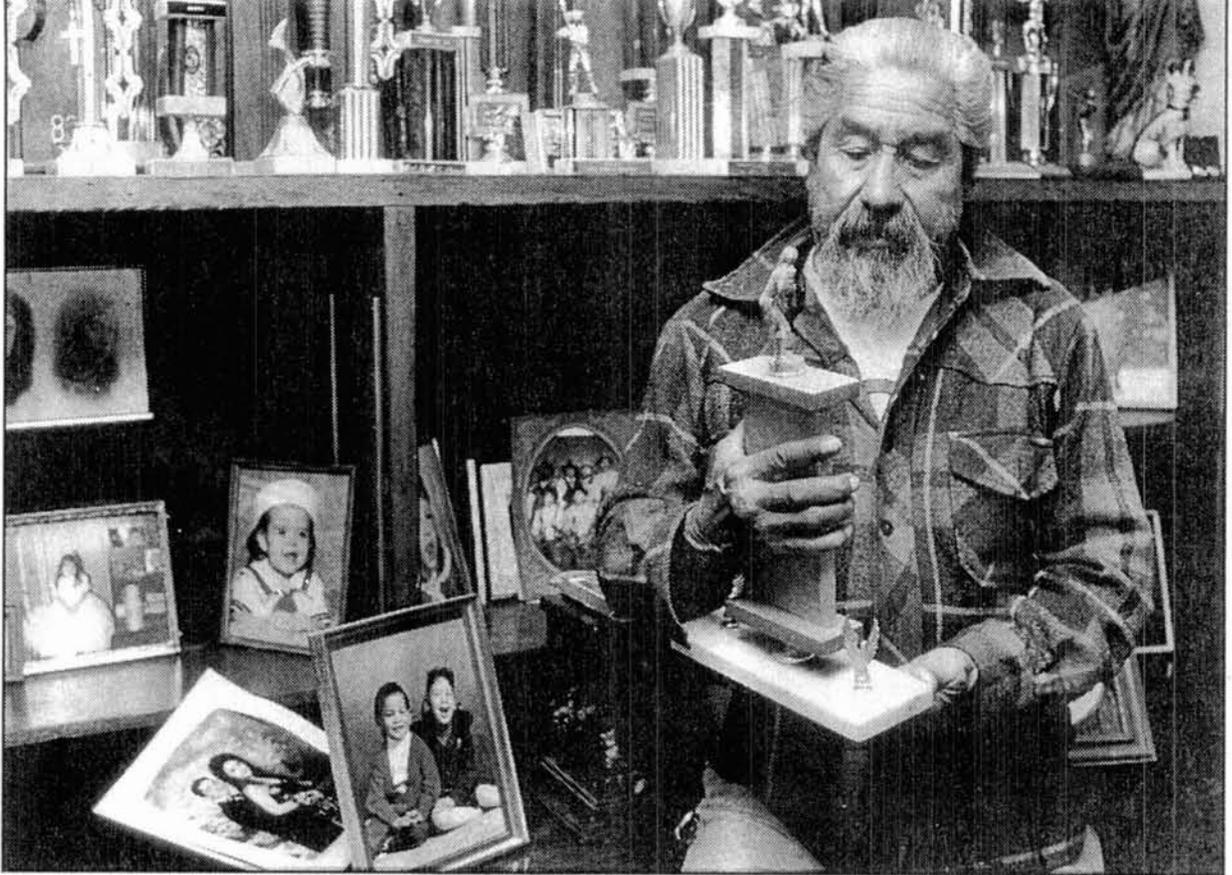
Jose Quintana's son, Robert, said he and other youngsters looked up to the Latin Gents, some of whom were his uncles and older cousins. Robert was nicknamed "Lil' Man" because he started hanging out with gang members at an early age.

In the mid-'70s, when Robert Quintana turned 15, some of the Latin Gents suggested that he and his friends start the Future Latin Gents, giving the youngsters their own peer group.

Shortly after forming the group, Robert Quintana was shot in the left arm. He was wounded again at age 26, this time stabbed in the heart and nearly killed. A scar from open-heart surgery runs from his neck to his stomach.

"Getting hurt didn't make me want to quit. It made me angry," he said.

Robert Quintana, now 30, has kept photos of his gang — his homeboys — and yellowed news clip-



Charlaine Brown/The Orange County Register

Pete Guadan holds one of the trophies he won for the La Colonia barrio during a more benign phase of the rivalry with Big Stanton.

pings about friends who were killed, wounded or arrested.

The back half of the tattered scrapbook is filled with photos from Robert Quintana's four years in prison for an armed robbery he committed in 1978.

Robert Quintana said prison changed his view of gangs. He said the gang stigma hangs with him today because employers won't hire an ex-con.

"I used to think the guys in prison were cool, but (when I got there) then I found out they were nobody," he said. "By then it was too late. I had already become just like them."

After his release from prison in 1982, Robert Quintana returned to the barrio to find that youngsters had given up the monikers of their elders — Latin Gents and Los Innocentes — opting to be known simply by the names of their respective barrios.

Quintana's gang legacy appears to have fallen on his 21-year-old cousin, Martin Rene Rodriguez, who has been charged with firing the shots that killed Ibarra on April 29.

Rodriguez said he did not kill Ibarra, and has nothing to do with gangs.

Members of Big Stanton and La Colonia gangs say they are bound not only by allegiances to their respective neighborhoods, but also by their ethnicity, age and — in many cases — blood relationships.

Gang suppression director Hodges said breaking barrio youths from their gang bloodline often is a lost cause.

"It's like the Hatfields and McCoys," Hodges said, comparing the barrio conflict to the famous Appalachian feud in which 20 people died over 30 years.

Quintana said he would tell kids not to follow in his footsteps, but he doesn't believe it would help.

"I could tell them not to be in gangs until I'm blue in the face, but they wouldn't listen," he said. "They just have to grow out of it."

Other barrio residents, however, say the gang tradition can be stopped.

Domingo Avalos, 74, who grew up in La Colonia, said many barrio children survive without joining gangs. He blames parents for the violence.

Longtime La Colonia resident Juan Ontiveros said parents today are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living and have a more difficult time keeping an eye on their kids because both parents are working.

"With the parents so busy trying to pay the bills, the kids have no one to watch them," Ontiveros said. "They grow up wild."

The residents of these nearby barrios are proud of where they live. In La Colonia, the Craftsman-style homes and yards are slightly larger than the mostly stucco homes in Stanton. But nearly twice as many people live in the Stanton barrio, though the two communities cover about the same area.

Most residents in both barrios take meticulous care of their lawns. Some have planted shade trees. Others have planted rosebushes with red and pink blooms. Only graffiti spray painted on street signs and fences belie the barrios' idyllic calm.

Back on Garza Avenue, 16-year-old Luke and his friends sip beers and smoke cigarettes. Originally from Santa Ana, Luke said a cousin introduced him to La Colonia boys.

Luke, whom friends call "Spiderman," said he joined the gang because it was fun.

"I like the excitement, especially the shootings. Bam! Bam! Bam!" said Luke as his hands fired imaginary pistols.

"As long as my homeboys don't get hurt, I'm happy."

# Gang crime in general on increase, officials say

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

Beyond the Big Stanton and La Colonia conflict, gang violence appears on the rise throughout the county, law enforcement officials report.

Colleen Hodges, director of the Orange County Probation Department gang violence suppression unit, said gang activity has increased steadily since last summer.

"But everyone has a different reason for the increase," she said.

The reasons include: gangs have become trendy with young people; parental supervision has declined, allowing more kids to get involved; guns are readily available; the media has focused too much attention on gangs.

Santa Ana police have reported 10 gang-related killings in the city so far this year. The total for 1989 was 11.

A new gang-prevention task force hit the streets of Dana Point, Laguna Niguel, San Juan Capistrano, San Clemente and El Toro in July in an effort to stop a budding gang problem in south Orange County. The task force was created after a group of San Clemente youths surrounded a woman's car July 6 and ordered her to "get off our street."

Irvine police are dealing with a youth gang named Los Sui Cynos. Named after a heavy metal band called Suicidal Tendencies, Los Sui Cynos was thought to be of little consequence, but it is establishing ties with hard-core gangs outside the city, Irvine police Lt. Vic Thies said.

Westminster police responded to three gang-related shootings two weeks ago. No one was injured.

"Gangs are everywhere, whether you want to admit it or not," Westminster police spokesman Robin Capp said.