­­A Child’s Story of Socorro

By Sheri Armijo

**Sixth grade actor:**

Socorro is kind of basically the story of our ancestors and people who have been here from since a long time ago, 1598 and before that, so

**Sheri Armijo:**

New Mexico is full of great historical events. The town where I live, Socorro, was the setting for a very special interaction between the native people of the area and the Spanish-speaking colonists that came here in 1598. They came up El Camino Real. I wrote this play when I moved to Socorro in 2004. I was teaching first grade at the time and I was looking for a child’s version of the story and to my surprise I couldn’t find one. So I felt it was very important for the children of Socorro to know this story because it’s about history about their home town. So what better way than to have them act out the story for themselves and for others. The play has been presented by several of my classes since 2004. This year it will be presented by sixth graders from Cottonwood Valley Charter School where I’m their Spanish teacher. We are excited to present this play for the National Park Service. We hope that you will enjoy learning about Socorro.

**Narrator:**

Long ago the Pueblo people lived by the river in a large village called Teypana, which meant “Village Flower” in their language.

In June of 1598 a group of over 500 Spanish-speaking people, including Indians and slaves, came from Mexico. There were 130 soldiers & families.

Oñate knew they would find *Indios de los pueblos* because of the records of the Rodríquez-Chamuscado Expedition in 1581.

They had traveled hundreds of miles on El Camino Real. They would walk or ride horses. Some of the men, women, and children got sick and some died.

They brought horses, cows, oxen, mules, donkeys, goats, pigs, Churro sheep, dogs, and a cat.

Their leader Juan de Oñate carried a banner of “*Nuestra Senora de los Remedios”* known as Socorro, which means Our Lady of Succur.

They were ragged after coming out of the *Jornada* *del Muerto,* a 90-mile stretch of land without water. They were hot and tired and hungry and thirsty. They thought they were going to die. They prayed for help.

**Colonists and others:**

*Socorro! Socorro! Socorro!*

**Narrator:**

They stopped and camped across from Qualacu on the east bank of the *Río Grande.*

Qualacu was a Piro-speaking pueblo settlement. The people there were farmers. The people of Qualacu were not certain they wanted anything to do with newcomers. They fled from their pueblo.

The Piros heard them speaking a different language. They didn’t understand Spanish but they could tell that the Spanish speakers needed help.

The Piro crowded on the rooftops of their houses to see the strangers. They believed these strangers to be “children of the sun.”

The leader Letoc was not afraid. Through signs with his hands, he showed that he wanted to be friendly. He offered them a huge gift of com.

The Piro people gave them water to drink.

They also had squash and pumpkins.

The Piros showed them plants for making dyes for cloth and herbs for medicines.

The Spanish-speaking people were so happy to be helped. They gave the Piro people the wonderful things they brought with them.

They gave them sheep and lambs.

They showed them how to make cloth out of the wool from the sheep. They also brought other things to trade.

They acted out a play for the Piro people to teach them different ways to pray.

**Narrator:**

The Spanish speakers taught the Piros how to build a church.

They named the church *Nuestra Señora de Socorro de Pilabo*, because of the relief that they received.

The colonists and Piros learned from each other. New ideas, new foods, and new ways to farm helped both cultures achieve succor.

**All:**

Relief!

**Narrator:**

And everyone learned to be friends in Socorro.