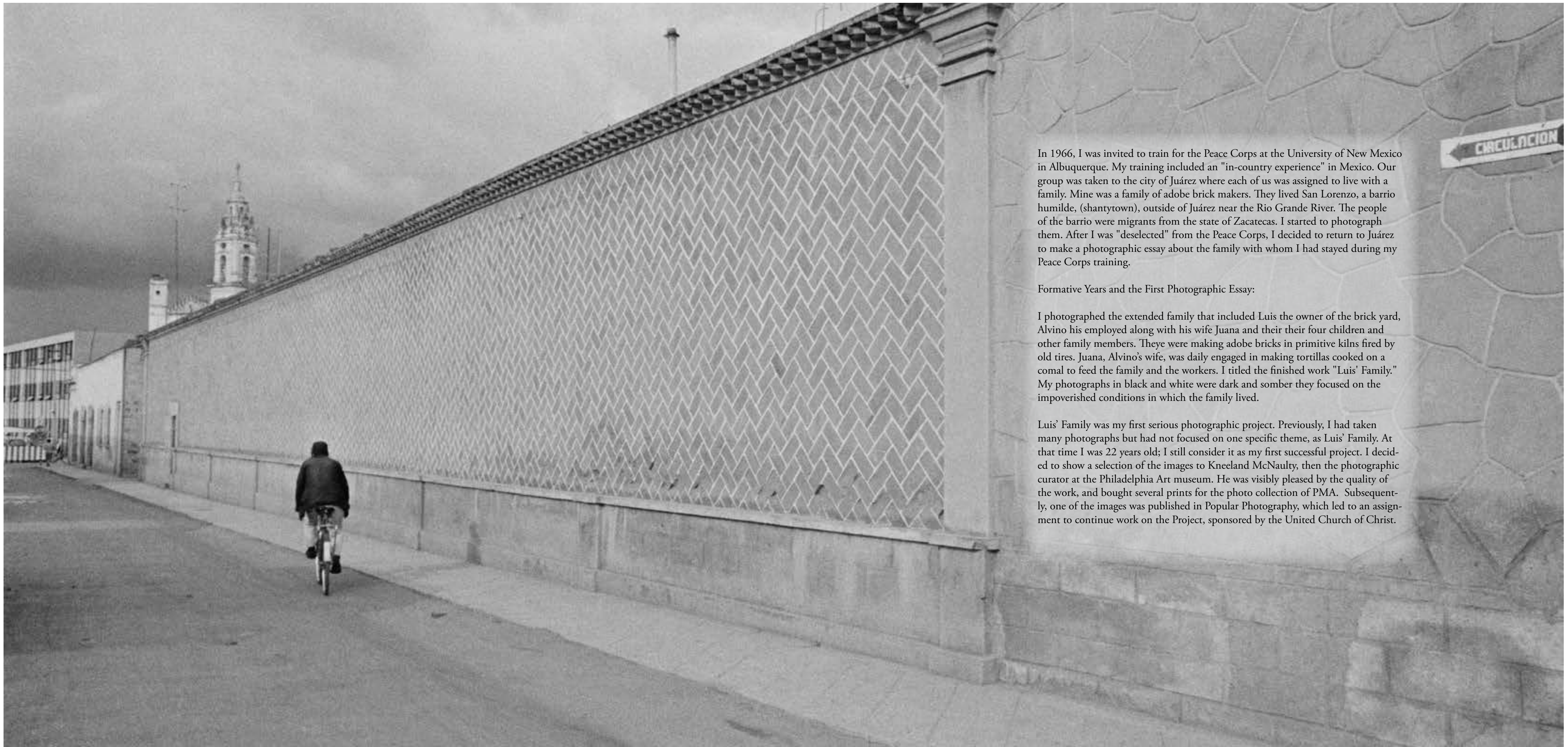


Luis's Family

a portfolio



Laurence Salzmann



In 1966, I was invited to train for the Peace Corps at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. My training included an "in-country experience" in Mexico. Our group was taken to the city of Juárez where each of us was assigned to live with a family. Mine was a family of adobe brick makers. They lived San Lorenzo, a barrio humilde, (shantytown), outside of Juárez near the Rio Grande River. The people of the barrio were migrants from the state of Zacatecas. I started to photograph them. After I was "deselected" from the Peace Corps, I decided to return to Juárez to make a photographic essay about the family with whom I had stayed during my Peace Corps training.

Formative Years and the First Photographic Essay:

I photographed the extended family that included Luis the owner of the brick yard, Alvino his employed along with his wife Juana and their their four children and other family members. They were making adobe bricks in primitive kilns fired by old tires. Juana, Alvino's wife, was daily engaged in making tortillas cooked on a comal to feed the family and the workers. I titled the finished work "Luis' Family." My photographs in black and white were dark and somber they focused on the impoverished conditions in which the family lived.

Luis' Family was my first serious photographic project. Previously, I had taken many photographs but had not focused on one specific theme, as Luis' Family. At that time I was 22 years old; I still consider it as my first successful project. I decided to show a selection of the images to Kneeland McNaulty, then the photographic curator at the Philadelphia Art museum. He was visibly pleased by the quality of the work, and bought several prints for the photo collection of PMA. Subsequently, one of the images was published in Popular Photography, which led to an assignment to continue work on the Project, sponsored by the United Church of Christ.

