Like the three r's, readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic, we're the three P's -- with a capital letter! Strange how three fellows can become so inseparable -- especially when one is, well, quite different from the other two. But that's the way things happen to be with us -Peter, Paul, and Pauncho.
I'm Peter Lankford. Paul's my younger brother and Pauncho is a Carlos--no relation at all. But somehow, he seems closer to Paul and me than many brothers I know. Pauncho's all right. Yes, Sir. Real smart too, Pauncho is. He catches on to things quickly. Like the time we took him to church. Say! I'd better start at the beginning so you'll understand.

Pauncho (like I stated previously) is a Carlos. His father, Pedro Carlos, is Mexican...all the way through Mexican, as is his mother. Pauncho has three sisters and two brothers who are equally brilliant and smart.

Peter Lankford, Sr. (my father) is a big dairy farmer as well as a fruit grower. You should see the hillsides come springtime! The peach, apple, pear, plum, and cherry trees all dress out in their prettiest deep reds, pale pinks, and whites and really put on a fashion parade for us. It's not superfluous either, this fashion parade, but is natural as natural can be. It's a spectacle I hope you may see someday--fruit trees in full bloom wearing robins (real five ones), song sparrows and cardinals in their hair!

Now, back to Pauncho! It was early spring when a big truck rattled to an abrupt stop in front of our sprawling two-story white frame house and a big, clean-looking man knocked politely on the front door.

"You need'a some help?" he asked Father in broken English, bowing and smiling.

"Not yet, Sir," Father answered truthfully. "Come back later -- say about the last of June."

"You cann'a no usa help now?" the man asked with crestfallen countenance. "I need'a work bad an' I work guud. I hal family," and he pointed to the truck where his family and few earthly possessions were waiting.

By this time the children had climbed from the truck and were trying to stretch their stiff legs and bodies. They never moved far away from the truck so you could tell right off they'd had good training.

A woman, beautiful of countenance and comparatively fair-skinned with long silken-looking black hair, smiled wearily at the five faces that looked
lovingly into the cab of the truck where she sat cradling the sixth small child in her arms.

"Meestair, I worka hard," the man pled, almost begging now, "eef only you give'a me a try. Ve needa food. I haf misfortune . . . lose all but my fam'ly an'. . . ."

I saw Father study the man . . . long and hard. "What's your name?" he asked kindly.

"Pedro Carlos." (The man was smiling again.)

"Peter," Father said, "show Mr. Carlos to the big house in the orchard. The 'big' house," he stressed.

Something about the family found a chord of mutual blending with Father. I could tell that immediately. He was a shrewd judge of human character and he apparently "judged" something wonderful in the family to have them move into the big house..., and that early spring, too, when the trees were just beginning to blossom!

Always, the "big" house was reserved and kept for the family of immigrant help whom Father felt was most deserving and who would take good care of the house and its furnishings. The "big" house (all of six rooms) was a sort of gift from Dad to that family who wanted to live good and carefully but who had never before had any niceties. It worked wonders on the help Father got each year: for as each family took pride in the few rooms of the smaller cabins and cottages assigned to them (and kept them tidy and clean) Daddy saw that they got something a little better the following year. In this manner he had very little trouble getting desirable help. Every large family looked forward to the day when they could move into the big house which was furnished modestly but tastefully, neatly and adequately, and looked indeed "like home." This is where I was to show Pedro Carlos to.

"Follow me," I said, as I started through the orchard.

"Mind if I tag along?" a voice broke suddenly into my thoughts and heart musings as I ran. I turned about and came face to face with the largest Carlos boy.
"I'm Pauncho Carlos," he laughed, falling in step with me and speaking perfect English. "I need some exercise. My legs are terribly cramped. We've been riding a long time." He was silent for awhile. He continued, faltering occasionally. "Father . . . needs work . . . and . . . your father will not be sorry for his kindness." Again he smiled broadly.

"I'm Peter Lankford," I said by way of introduction, "and I'm glad Father's putting you in the big house. You'll like it." Then as we ran steadily and evenly side by side I added, "You'll like my father and mother, Pauncho . . . very much."

"I already like them," he rejoined quickly. "They are kind people. Our gods heard our prayer and led Father to your house."

"There is only one God, Pauncho," I attested, running all the while and looking intently into the earnest, sincere face beside me, "that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He, it must be, led you here. The Bible says, 'I am the Lord God and beside me there is none other.'"

"Bible?" Pauncho questioned, his mind open and eager for learning. "The Lord Jesus Christ! Who is He, Peter?"

"He's my Savior," I confessed, marveling at the frankness and the openness of my newfound friend.

"He's the One Who made you, Pauncho, and He's the only God. He's God of heaven, earth, the sea and all things. You must go with me to church some day. Promise you will." I pressed him as we came suddenly out into a clearing where twelve small white houses were nestled peacefully and cozily in a section all to themselves. A short distance away stood the big house.

"This is where Father wants you to stay," I told Mr. Carlos, unlocking the door and leading the way inside. "It's a sort of special house," I explained as the family let out joyful o--oh's and a--ah's.

Seeing the tears of gratitude, I bowed suddenly out and disappeared in the orchard, having learned long since not to intrude in anything so sacred and wonderful as this.
That was nearly three years ago, and the Carlos family had by now become permanent residents in the big house, for Father had taken an extra-special liking to, and concern for, the Carlos family. Each member of the family worked with diligence, might, and fervor and did his duty with utmost accuracy and care. The big house was kept meticulously neat and clean and the family was as happy as the birds that nested, sang, and fed in the orchard.

From the very beginning I had asked Pauncho to go with us to church while Paul worked on a younger brother, Enrique. One Sunday, many weeks later, we were joyfully rewarded: a slight knock sounded on the door. Answering it, I found Pauncho. He greeted me pleasantly, smiling broadly and dressed handsomely, he said, simply, "I'm ready for church."

That was a great day. A great, great day for Pauncho! All through the Sunday school session he sat alert, listening to this that was all so new to him. But he had an open heart and when Rev. Liggett preached, Pauncho's great expressive eyes filled full with tears and spilled down his dark handsome face unashamed.

"Would you like to know Jesus?" I asked.

"I would," he replied honestly, looking intently into my face for the answer to his new and strange feeling in his heart. "Seems like Someone's talking to me in here," he added tearfully, laying his hand upon his heart.

Rising, I led the way to the mourner's bench where we knelt side by side and Pauncho prayed through and found the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.

"I'm so happy," he shouted, facing the congregation. "I have found the True God! He has become my Lord and Savior. Oh, I love Him! I love Him!"

Pauncho was a living testimony to the transforming, saving power of God and it wasn't long until he sought after and obtained the wonderful experience of heart Holiness. When the boy told his father of the radical but wonderful change in his heart and life the elder Carlos became suddenly enraged.
"You haf gone too far," he said, raising his voice above his usually well modulated form of speaking. "Our gods will be angry weeth us!"

"There is no god but my God, Father. He is the True God . . . the Living God," Pauncho answered softly. "He is real, Father, Very, very real. He lives within my heart. I long for you and Mother to come to know Him as I do. My brothers and sisters, too."

"Say no more," Mr. Carlos commanded, dropping the subject.

Pauncho prayed much (alone) in the orchard and when his work was finished for the day he and Paul and I went to a special place in the farthest corner of the haymow where we united our prayers in behalf of his family.

During this time my father had seen to it that each of the Carlos children had special schooling, all of which had especial bearing upon Pedro's and Maria's soft hearts.

"You hal been too kind to us," Mr. Carlos remarked one day, "an' ve hal no means to repay you, Meestair Lankford."

"I wish only one thing, Mr. Carlos," Father said softly, hoarsely. "That is your salvation. Pauncho is different . . . wondrously different since his conversion. You'll. . . ."

"He ees diff'rent, Meestair Lankford, an' . . . an' . . . Maria an' I weel not stand een his way. . . ."

"Then you allow him to . . . to go to Bible school to prepare for evangelizing his own people?" and Father suddenly threw his big hard working arms around the shoulders of the astonished Mr. Carlos.

"I . . . I . . . weel consent," he said, weeping softly and bowing his head and walking thoughtfully away.

I told you that Pauncho was smart. Well, in a few short years he had graduated from Bible school with honors and was on his way to preach to his own people Things changed much after our beloved Pauncho left for good. The Carlos family felt it keenly, too, and one night after work had been done Pedro Carlos and Maria came to the house
"I . . . I . . . am convinced, Meestair Lankford. Thees salvation ees real an' I want it . . . like Pauncho got it. Maria an' I are here to haf prayer"

Oh, that was a wonderful scene, and I thought all of the tears Pauncho had shed in the haymow and orchard, and all the prayers he had prayed and I knew every one of them was being answered this very minute! It didn't take Pedro and Maria long to get saved and a few days later they came to the house again, hungry for heart purity. This time they brought all the children, and when they went to the "big" house that night they had "household salvation" and Maria and Pedro had been sanctified wholly.

A few days later Mr. Carlos came to the door looking sad. "I . . . I must go, Meestair Lankford. I . . . I . . . feel I must help Pauncho. My people need saved, too. I haf no words to say what I want to say to you. You haf been guud, guud!" He looked at Father then suddenly threw his great brown arms about Father's neck and wept like a hurt child.

"I understand, Mr. Carlos. I sha ll miss you more than you can ever know. You have become like one of the family. But I have been praying for this for a long time. You are needed in your own land, by your own people Go, and may God bless you all. You are welcome back here any time."

I cried hard when the Carlos family left Paul did, too. (And so did Mom.) Most every day I meander slowly through the orchard to the tree where Paul, Pauncho and I helped to pray some things to pass. (I still pray there -- every day.) Then, quite impatiently, I hurry to the big house, where Mrs. Carlos' roses are in full bloom and where Marietta and Enrique's garden has weeds (but they'll not be there long, Paul and I will see to that). The silence is too oppressive so I hurry through the orchard to the farm house where Shep waits for me. I can hardly wait till I see Pauncho. It won't be too long. You see, the Lord called me to be a missionary there . . . (when I was first converted as a child). Oh, His ways are past finding out! Aren't they? He sent the Carlos family our way that we might help them find Jesus and while we were working at the job He, through Pauncho, helped me to learn Spanish! Paul and I won't be separated too long, either, Lord willing, for he's coming to Mexico, too, after he's through Bible school. Once again we'll be reunited . . . the three P's (with a capital letter).
Oh, yes, one thing more: Father's farm has never before produced like it's doing since he took the Carlos family on as God's missionaries. God had laid it on Dad's heart to support (not part time, but full) the Carlos family. And he says he knows the Lord will help the cattle to be even more productive when Paul and I are needing support, too. He's a great man, my father, and a keen judge of humanity. I'm proud to be his son, Peter Lankford, Jr.