

Albq author hopes to make it to film

By CHARLOTTE BLACK
Tribune Accent Writer

Rudolfo Anaya should know within the month whether his original teleplay, "Rosa Linda," will be aired this season by the Public Broadcasting Company.

The story is a tragedy set in turn-of-the-century New Mexico. If it makes it to the screen, Anaya will join the small handful of Southwestern authors who have had their work transmitted to film.

Anaya's first novel, "Bless Me, Ultima," established his reputation as a major New Mexico author. For several years the book was considered for filming, but success, in that case, was illusive. It's a source of frustration, but not something on which he seems to dwell. Toughminded and somewhat driven, he keeps his life as full as possible, putting as much passion into buying a rosebush as into polishing the nuances of a manuscript.

Summer school classes have started at the University of New Mexico. He's busy with teaching and also has other projects — including the negotiations with PBS — to keep up his interest. He has speaking engagements, and he is active in the recently organized Rio Grande Institute, a group fostering the Indian and Hispanic cultures of the Rio Grande Valley.

Anaya, 45, and his wife have just returned from a two-week visit to Cuernavaca, Mexico, two weeks of resting, absorbing the beauty of the Cuernavaca Valley, and — of course — writing.

"Writing is a 24-hour-a-day passion. No wonder most writers look like they're burned out most of the time," he says.

To his popular trilogy, "Bless Me, Ultima," "Heart of Aztlan" and "Tortuga," he has added "Cuentos," a translation of folk tales, and "The Silence of the Llano," a book of short stories. The latter, which includes a chapter from each of the early books, came out last fall and is now in its second printing.

He has at the printer a novella which suggests that La Malinche, mistress to Cortez, was the basis of the legend of La Llorona, whose restless soul moans and wails throughout dark New Mexico nights.

And almost ready to go is another major novel, this

one with political undertones. "The Manuscripts of the Duke of Albuquerque," Anaya says, "is a contemporary novel about a man who is insane, but wants to run a city."

"We're living in an extraordinary age, with new cycles all the time. New people, new money, always somebody who wants to run things. The Southwest has been raped many times. Dallas, Phoenix, Denver, Las Vegas. They've had it. But there's still Albuquerque. We have a tremendous immigration of people who want positions of power and/or money. And there are always people who want to shape a city in their mold."

He is also doing research for a book on Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent of Mexico, and next year plans a trip to China. The journey to the Orient will be for both pleasure and research. He will be seeking, he says, the origin of the Golden Carp, a legendary creature in New Mexican folklore.

"Oriental and Western civilizations meet here in the Southwest, and it makes the West interesting," he says. "I would like to know more about each of them."

By all accepted standards, Anaya is a success, but he finds it hard to be impressed. That he has made a place for himself he attributes, possibly, to a difference between Hispanic and Anglo life styles.

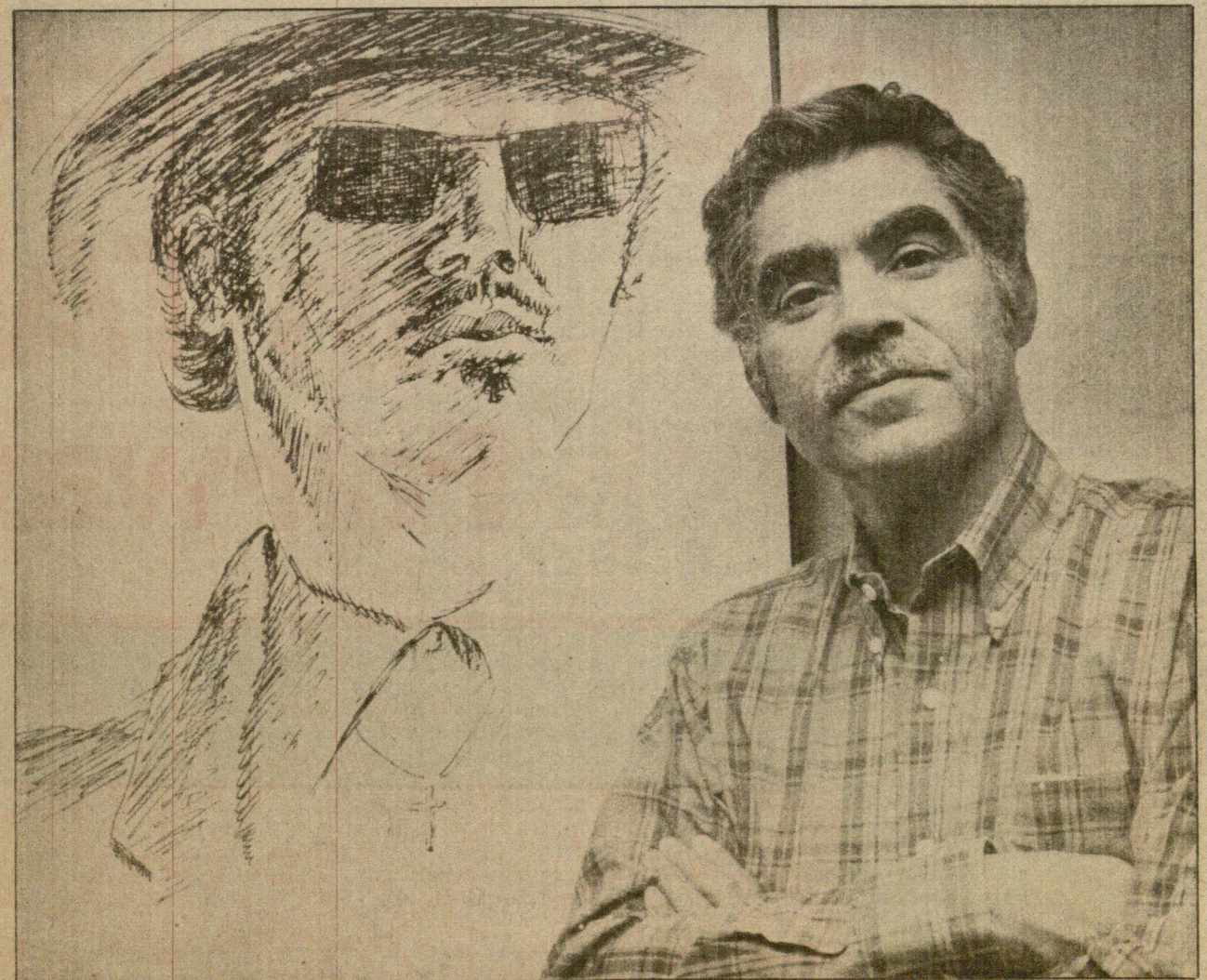
"I would suggest that we (Hispanics) are given more freedom to find ourselves. There is no pressure to 'be' one thing or another. I had space to develop whatever side of me I wished, to follow my own inclinations, knowing that my family would support me."

And material success, he says, is an illusion.

"Comfort is not something that the artist seeks. If it comes, that's just gravy. But every time you start a story or essay you're always back at first base, and no amount of money can buy you freedom from that."

It's good to seek change, he says. "Some people are contented to stay home and cultivate their gardens. It takes effort to break out. We fear the unexpected, but it's the unexpected that charges us up. You should move out, get your basic juices flowing."

He says he doesn't know what he will be doing 10 years from now. "I can't even see that far ahead. I'm going to burn the candle at both ends this year. Time is to be lived, not measured out in coffee spoons."



(Tribune photo by Michael Gallegos)

Rudy Anaya stands in his University of New Mexico office