



La Partera: Story of a Midwife (Ann Arbor Paperbacks)

Fran Leeper Buss

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Jesusita Aragon earned the title "la partera," or midwife, at the age of fourteen. Apprenticed to her grandmother, she learned the traditional Hispanic methods of assisting childbirth. She won the coveted title by performing her first delivery when an expectant mother went into labor in her grandmother's absence. In the years that followed, she was often the only source of medical care available in an isolated, mountainous area of New Mexico. Jesusita was so prized for her medical wisdom that she came to deliver more than 12,000 babies in the course of her career.

This is Jesusita's story, told in her own words. She describes her early training as a midwife, her forced departure from home due to two unmarried pregnancies, and her solitary struggle to support her children. *La Partera* tells how she gradually emerged as a leader in her community, painstakingly building by hand a small maternity center for her patients while gaining the respect of the Anglo medical community.

As Jesusita's story unfolds, so too does the story of the women of the region. Supplemental sections by the author illuminate Jesusita's culture and past, along with a historical account of the network of medical care provided by Hispanic and Anglo female healers. Illustrated with photographs of both people and places, *La Partera* reflects the culture of an era through the prism of Jesusita's hard and useful life.

Fran Leeper Buss lives and teaches in Tucson, Arizona.

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