

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Merida, Mexico. At this location in the thick jungles near Cancun, a guided hunt is underway. The hunters are stalking a wild turkey. Their guide has come here all the way from Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Carlos Navarro is the owner and founder of a hunter's outfitting service known as Santa Maria Ranch. Carlos has a fascinating history. He was born in Monterrey, Mexico where his father was a professional soccer player. Carlos especially enjoyed the outdoors. Their family home was on the edge of town, just a block from the woods. Carlos and other little boys in the neighbourhood would go rabbit hunting with slingshots.

One day when Carlos was five, he went with his family to a nearby sulphur springs for medicinal bathing. He saw the men shooting target practice with .22 rifles and preparing to go on a hunt. Carlos was so interested that he cried until his father consented to take him along on the hunt as well. After that, Carlos was hooked.

By the time Carlos was fifteen, he was organizing hunting trips with his friends. He also figured out that if he volunteered to take his great-grandmother to visit her family in the mountains, she could visit relatives while he went hunting, so he volunteered often. What a good great-grandson....

Down the street from Carlos lived an American husband and wife with a couple of children. Since they had no extended family nearby, Carlos' family adopted them as their own. He and his cousins started calling the American kids their cousins as well.

Carlos grew up, studied chemistry in college and went to work in the laboratory of a chemical company. At age 21, he found that one of his childhood American "cousins" had moved to Kansas City. Carlos came up for a visit and found that he liked it. He got a visa, got a job washing dishes and set out to learn English.

Carlos took a bus to English classes at a church two times a day. He learned English so well that his wife told him, "You would be a good interpreter." He was tested and, sure enough, did prove to be an excellent interpreter. For 13 years he worked as a medical interpreter at the KU Medical Center in Kansas City.

Carlos has a strong passion for hunting. On one bowhunt in Mexico, Carlos bagged a world record Yucatan grey-brown Brockett deer, which is said to be so elusive that only 33 have ever been shot with a rifle and just three with a bow, ever. It took the famous naturalist Aldo Leopold several trips and multiple years before he finally got one.

In 2000, Carlos bought a 480-acre Geary County farm named Santa Maria Ranch. Carlos set up a guiding and outfitting service for hunters, opened the ranch for hunting and identified neighbors who would open their farms for lease hunting as well.

Today, the Santa Maria Ranch outfitting service operates on more than 10,000 acres of privately owned land in the heart of the Flint Hills. The acreage is south of Interstate 70, primarily between Junction City and the rural community of Skiddy which has a population of perhaps 20 people. Now, that's rural.

This rural acreage is farmground and grassland, intersected by deep timbered draws and creeks which make the area ideal for deer and turkey hunting. Carlos' customers might also hunt for predators such as bobcats or coyotes.

Through old friends in Mexico, Carlos also books hunts south of the border. Primarily these are turkey hunts, but Carlos also leads big game hunts. His customers have come from coast to coast and beyond. For more information, go to [www.santamariaranch.com](http://www.santamariaranch.com).

It's time to say Adios to Merida, Mexico, where a guide from Kansas is leading a wild turkey hunt. We salute Carlos Navarro for making a difference by building on his hunting skills to create an international business. In organizing this enterprise, he definitely hit the target.

And there's more. Carlos has another distinction which is held by only ten people in the whole western world. We'll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.