



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Margaret Miller Laumbach

DATE OF BIRTH: May 11, 1913 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: December 30, 1997 & January 7, 1998

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Las Cruces, NM home of her son, Karl Laumbach

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: March 26, 1998

NUMBER OF TAPES: Four

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRACTED: March 17, 1999

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Daughter of immigrants – father from Austria & mother from Volga region of Russia. Her childhood on a subsistence farm/ranch near Maxwell, NM. Her education (to 8th grade) in a one-room school, then she attended junior high and high school in Springer, NM, and one year of business college in Missouri. Married George Laumbach, and together they managed the Clayton Ranch near Springer, NM from 1940 – 1982.

DATE RANGE: 1913-1998

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Mrs. Laumbach's older brother drowned in a lake on their ranch near Eagle Tail when he was only two. She states her father "really never got over it."

Mrs. Lambauch grew up near Maxwell, NM on a ranch in the Eagle Tail area.

Her father, Rudolph Mueller (later Miller) immigrated to the United States. He was born in Austria in 1864, first came to the United States when he was 17, then returned to Europe, before immigrating permanently to the US. He settled in Trinidad, CO where he worked as a pastry chef at the Columbian Hotel. Elizabeth Wuerfuez, mother (born 1887) immigrated to the US from Volga region of Russia in 1893 with her family. They settled in Hays, Kansas in a community of Germans from Russia. Her father and brother went to work on the railroad. When the railroad was completed Mr. Wuerfuez took a homestead on Brella Mesa in southern Colorado, and later moved to Raton, NM.

Elizabeth Wuerfuez and Rudolph Mueller married November 27, 1908 and moved to the ranch near Eagle Tail. This ranch was purchased by Rudolph Mueller, his two brothers, and his mother. Originally they planned to establish a brewery at the ranch because of the fine spring water. They could not establish the brewery because of difficulty in getting the product (beer) to market.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

When Laumbach's parents went to live at the ranch at Eagle Tail it was stocked with cattle and horses, and orchards had been planted. For a time the Muellers ran a boarding establishment for people with tuberculosis, who were seeking health in the West. They closed their sanitarium when the State of New Mexico decided to build a facility in Albuquerque.

Improvements on the ranch including an irrigation system, duck house, and a seven-bedroom house.

After the sanitarium closed, her father got wage work, often it would be in Denver as a pastry cook.

Some additional structures on the ranch included a 'bake oven' that was constructed outdoors, (it had a 10 – 12 loaf capacity), there was also an ice house where ice was stored for use in summer.

Her mother canned vegetables and fruit, but did not dry produce. Margaret learned to can meat later through the Extension Service.

Laumbach's father died in 1926. She was 13, and had four younger brothers at home.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Continued to discuss the impact of her father's death.

Describes driving a horse and buggy five miles to the "Hardscrabble" school. It took them one hour to get to the one-room school (one teacher taught all 8 grades). Names four of her teachers. The teachers lived with a nearby family until the teacherage was constructed.

Discusses the varieties of winter apples that the family grew – Ben Davis and Northern Spy.
Describes some of the desserts her father made.

Christmas party at the school, arranged by the teacher.

Laumbach's maternal grandmother, who had been widowed, remarried and moved to a homestead east of Springer. In 1911, she was murdered at the homestead. The account of the murder that Laumbach knew from childhood is not the same as the news story in the Raton paper.

In December 1926, ten months after her father died, their seven bedroom home burned to the ground.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

After the fire, the family moved to the one-bedroom house that was located in the orchard.

When Margaret was in 8th grade she attended school in Springer, living with an aunt during the school year. One year during summer vacation she and her brother worked on a prairie dog eradication program.

Discusses how their mother carried on with the ranch following her father's death. The children took apples to the railroad stop at Schamburg and every other weekend sold a few pounds. Some neighbors helped Mrs. Miller with branding and vaccinating the cattle.

Talks about a neighbor man dying at home. Margaret stayed with the wife, following her husband's death, for a period of two weeks.

Her mother told sold the ranch at Eagle Tail in 1948.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

At home her parents spoke German until Laumbach's older sister went to school, and from then on spoke English.

States that her first grade teacher was Mrs. Rivercomb.

A laborer on their ranch was bitten by a rattlesnake, several chickens were killed, and the intestines placed on the bite. The man was also given whiskey. He survived the bite.

Discusses potent remedies used to treat colds. These could be purchased from the Watkins or Raleigh salesmen.

Describes mother's dumplings and potatoes, also butchering pork and beef for winter. Chickens and rabbits were eaten in the summer. The children would shoot the rabbits with their .22's.

She was baptized at the small, rural Catholic Church at Tinaja. There were also occasionally church services held at the school. A priest from Maxwell held services at the church in Tinja about once a month. They still celebrate (in August) San Isidro Day at the church.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

Discussed that her family might have had things a little easier during her childhood than other families in the area. For example, better housing and access to water.

Wealthy people from Pennsylvania bought the ranch next to the Laumbach's. The owner came to New Mexico for his health, but did not remain long.

Attended 8th grade through high school in Springer. Margaret lived with her aunt, and drove a buggy the four miles into Springer.

Discusses that after graduating from high school she worked a year to earn money for college, and during this time met her husband-to-be, George Laumbach. She attended Business College in Chillicothe, Missouri. She did not return to Business College in the fall of 1935, but was married that December.

Laumbach family history. George Laumbach's grandfather emigrated from Germany in 1859. First went to Denver then to Mora, New Mexico searching for gold. George's father, Pedro, homesteaded near Roy, New Mexico and cattle ranched.

Her husband, George, went to work for the Clayton Ranch. The Clayton's were wealthy Californians, who bought part of the CS Ranch.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A:

The southern part of the CS Ranch (four miles west of Springer, NM) had been owned at one time by the Clouthiers, who built a three-story house. They lost the ranch, and it was bought by Porter, and then by Ed Springer (CS Ranch). Ed Springer then sold it to the Clayton's.

Clayton bought out several small Hispanic-owned ranches on the Cimarron River and added to the original ranch.

Laumbach's uncle by marriage, Desmet, was first a manager for the CS Ranch and then for the Clayton's. Desmet died in 1940 and George Laumbach took over the management of the Clayton Ranch and George and Margaret moved to headquarters. Before the move to headquarters they lived at the Old Ring place, which was 22 miles from Cimarron, and they would "cross the creek 22 times to get home." They shopped sometimes at Dawson where Phelps-Dodge had a company store.

When Laumbach cooked for hired help she used her own groceries and was paid \$ 0.15 for each meal she provided by the Clayton's.

Discusses the role of the ranch manager, and the Clayton's usual length of time spent at the ranch. The Laumbach's stayed on the ranch three years after it sold. It was purchased by the CS Ranch in 1979.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE B:

The Laumbach's were not allowed to keep any livestock of their own on the Clayton ranch.

Discusses more of the Laumbach family history. George's grandfather married Eleonor Ebell from the Watrous area.

Margaret Laumbach worked part time at the Springer Library from 1972 – 1993.

The practice of several area ranches using a cookhouse to feed the cowboys.

Remarks on the polo games at the CS Ranch, Philmont Ranch, and Viejo Ranch in approximately 1934 – 1936.

She earned extra income from occasionally selling eggs and cream.