



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANTS: Mary Alice Guthrie Viola Mildred Bounds Mildred Holland

DATE OF BIRTH: 1/19/1922 9/3/1923 2/20/1921

GENDER: Female Female Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: March 27, 2010

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Clayton Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Clayton, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Richard Chavez

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMFRHM

TRANSCRIBED: No

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABSTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: April 7, 2010

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Rural living in Clayton, N.M. during the Dust Bowl era of 1930s

DATE RANGE: 1930s

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Guthrie's mother came to New Mexico sometime in the 1800s with her mother and brother. Her mother's brother had settled in the Clayton, N.M., area. After she had been in Clayton for only a few days, she met Guthrie's father at the theater. They got married and moved to the country. Her father worked in a grocery store. They had a house on about a half an acre of land and raised chickens for the eggs.

When shown photos of a black dust cloud she recalls that there was no wind. It was a suffocating situation. She recalls that there was no air with it all, and that it was so black and so dark and so penetrating that you thought you were going to suffocate. Her father hung sheets on the windows to try to keep the dirt out, but it did not work. She says it lasted for several days. She remarks that "at age thirteen things were not quite as bad as they had looked to me," but that was the impression it had on her life.

Holland remarks that the Dust Bowl is what caused the Depression — it put all the farmers out of business. Her father had said that the wind came in and you could not see your hand in front of your face, even if you held it close to your face. Most people walked around with a wet washcloth over their faces so that they could breathe easier. There was no air. It was like compressed dirt. No wind, just the motion of the waves of dirt coming in.

Guthrie's family lived fifteen miles in the country, but they moved into town when the dust storm happened. The Dust Bowl left an impression on her and she will never forget. It was an experience that no one will ever forget.

Bounds recalls that a storm happened on a Sunday evening while she was at church. A lawyer's wife took her and her siblings home. Her parents already wet washrags for them to put over their noses because "it was coming in the house like mad." She was only twelve years old at the time, but she does not think it lasted two days. Her family had moved from Santa Fe to Clayton when she was about five years old. She doesn't know when they got electricity, but says she still has some kerosene lamps that they had used.

Holland says that her father was visiting his sick mother at the time the storm hit. Once his mother was better he returned to Kentucky because he did not like New Mexico. He said that Kentucky was green, had moisture, and that he could breathe fresh air there. During the storm her mother told her to keep a wet washcloth over her face to filter the air. She recalls that in the late 1930s people had to kill off their cattle because they needed the food. She says that the black dirt from Oklahoma was devastating for everyone. She thought the world was coming to an end.

Bounds remarks that she was too young to be scared.

Holland says that it took a long time to get everything cleaned up and that it was worse than a tornado.

Bounds says that her mother had to re-wash the laundry that had been hung out on the line.

Guthrie remarks that she wished she had thought to gather up some of the dust to show people what it really looked like.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B: Blank