



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: John P. Cauhape

DATE OF BIRTH: October 1, 1922 Gender: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 13, 2001

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Roswell residence

INTERVIEWER: Marcie Palmer

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM__X__OTHER_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: August 1, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: Caroline Palmer

DATE ABSTRATED: July 9, 2002

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Details family history and sheep ranching in southeastern New Mexico.

DATE RANGE: 1900 to 2001

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

John inherited the ranch when his father died. It is located twenty miles from Piñon, forty miles from Mayhill, and seventy-four miles from Artesia.

John's father, J. P., came from France in 1903 and worked in Montana on a sheep ranch. In 1905 he came to New Mexico and went in business with Frank Grusera. Then he was in business with a Mr. Pruethy; they bought a herd of sheep together at Hope. The two men were from France, also. By 1911 he invited his brother, Felix, to join him and in 1914 he brought another brother, Valentin, to New Mexico. They formed J. P. Cauhape and Brothers, Inc. Felix's grandson now operates half of the original ranch and John and Gloria have the other half. The ranch was divided in 1950.

John's mother and father married in 1914. His mother was school mates with Mary Yates in Mexico, Missouri; Mary was wife of Martin, the founder of Yates (oil) Petroleum Company of Artesia and Roswell. Mrs. Cauhape came to Artesia in 1912 to visit Mary Yates and met John P. Cauhape. Several months after their marriage they moved to the ranch near Hope. Felix and his wife came to live at the ranch, and Valentin lived there also. At the farm in Hope they raised hay for the ranch and, since there was a lot of water in the Penasco River, also had five thousand acres of apples.

By 1917 they bought a house in Roswell at the northeast corner of Alameda and Kentucky. John's older sister, Jean, was born in that house in 1918 (she eventually married Earl Clardy). John's sister, Mary Louise, was also born there in 1920 (she married Cooper Malone). John himself was born in the house in 1922.

The brothers bought their last ranch in 1929 and paid for it out right. His dad hired an attorney and worked with the state land office on boundaries of the ranch, because until 1932 and the implementation of the Taylor Grazing Act there were many disputes about the boundaries of the ranches. After World War I any veteran could prove up on a section of land for one year. The Cauhape brothers did well during the Depression because they owned their land.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

After John Cauhape's death in 1943 and John P.'s release from the army in 1945, in accordance with Mr. Cauhape's will, John had to work with his uncles for five years before he was qualified to inherit part of the ranch. So he worked for them running about 14,000 sheep. (His dad at one time owned 30,000 sheep). Mr. Cauhape describes the boundaries of the ranch based on water. He comments that we are now in the worst drought in history. Because of the wells they have drilled and the pipelines they have laid on the ranches, they are able to survive now. It simply doesn't rain like it did in the past.

On both ranches the total number of sheep is 8,500 now compared to 30,000 previously. The ranch was originally 220 sections and was divided into two 110-section ranches.

John's father came from France through Ellis Island. He went to Montana on the train, and was not able to speak any English. As was the custom in France, the oldest brother, Frank, inherited the home place in Lescun, France, near the Pyrenees. John Cauhape never went back to France.

His father's subsequent immigration from Montana to Clovis was described. (Felix and Valentin's emigration from France to Clovis was also described.

They drilled a well at Four Mile and a well at Piñon draw on the other side of the Guadalupe, so they bought all the land in between to make a continuous ranch. In 1927 they bought what is known as Sam Lewis Tank, after Harry Thorn had lost it to the bank. Then in 1929 they bought the South Ranch from Oliver Lee. In addition there was the farm at Hope that produced mainly feed for the ranch, but also apples.

The foothills and mountainous terrain of the Guadalupe Mountains extending from 4,000 feet elevation to 6,000 feet is well suited for sheep. There are low valleys which will accommodate cattle, too. The water sources are annual rainfall, the river, and wells. The first well was drilled at Piñon draw in 1911, then at Four Mile in 1914, both using the Fort Worth spudder, and those two wells are still working. The average well is between 800 feet and 1,000 feet deep. They still have three windmills, but now most wells use electric pumps.

As the dryer years came, the herds had to be reduced so as not to overgraze the land or become too dependent on expensive feed. So now 8,500 sheep are run. About 1937 wolf proof fencing was put up, and herds could be managed without herders. His father and uncle would hire a hundred herders, but now not only is it too expensive to hire herders, but there are not the people available to work on ranches.

The wolf proof fences are made of thirty-five inch net wire with three or four barbs on top with posts of wood and steel.

TAPE TWO SIDE A:

Many men who built the fence were miners from Mexico. They used sledgehammers and drills to set the posts. The equipment had to be hauled to the site by wagons because the terrain was so rough. The net wire and windmill parts were purchased from Mabel Lowrey Hardware in Roswell.

His father also ran about 2,000 head of goats; they were very susceptible to the weather like cold rain.

Early sheep herders camps, with the *caporal* and cook, were described. After the fences were erected, permanent homes were located throughout the ranch so that a modern herder could ride a horse to check on the livestock and to check for predators, like coyotes.

The sheep were and still are sheared in March and April, before the lambing in June and July. There used to be a huge shearing barn and wool storage at Four Mile Ranch and all the sheep were brought there. The shearing process is clearly described.

In tending sheep the two main jobs every day are checking the water and checking for coyote, bobcat, mountain lion, and wolves situation (the "varmint"). Then the third job is keeping the varmints under control and making sure your fences are mended.

In a herd of sheep, the old ewes are kept until they are seven years old, at that age they are too old to produce a lamb and their wool is less thick, and they are sold. Each year about a third to a half of the ewe lambs are kept as replacements (p.48).

When selling the sheep they use a large scale and loading chute at the Piñon well; the buyers provide the trucks to haul the sheep after weighing. There is an automatic two to three percent shrink taken from the lamb's weight when sold at the ranch. The herds used to be driven twenty to fifty miles into Artesia for sale and shipping.

Mr. Cauhape's range is 110 sections, much longer than it is wide, so he has two shearing barns. The wool is taken to the wool warehouse in Artesia. Now there are so few sheep in the area that there are only about one or two wool sales a year. Usually the wool is sold to Burlington Mills; the wool is put on the railroad and shipped east. The wool is classified in several grades and sample bags from each grade is shown the buyers.

In the past there was a government program that was not a subsidy, but a wool incentive program. The incentive program is described; it cost the taxpayer nothing because the payment to the United States sheep ranchers came from tariffs on imported wool and mohair fiber. The program was killed by Congress in 1994 or 1995; this was so devastating that as a result many sheep ranchers have gone out of business.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

The wool incentive program was started in 1980 and lasted fifteen years. Mr. Cauhape gives his opinion on why the program was eliminated. He also discusses the price of wool over the years.

All the debts on the property were paid by 1939. When he inherited the ranch in the early 1950s, Mr. Cauhape had to buy off his sisters' shares and has never had to borrow against the ranch. In the 1950s ranch labor cost \$3.00 a day, but now it's \$20.00 to \$30.00 a day, and it's still difficult to get help. Ranchers don't provide medical insurance.

The two main goals of a rancher are to develop the water and improve the herd. In an effort to improve the herd, expensive rams were purchased and the lamb crop and wool crop was better.

Mr. Cauhape reviewed the Taylor Grazing Act and the Soil Conservation Act, and the improvements resulting from these programs, and working with BLM and the State Land Office.

For personal use, they always owned milk cows and chickens, for the family and the men working for the ranch.

When Mr. Cauhape was thirteen he was driving/hauling rocks to help build the net wire fences.

In his father's time, the ranch was so big his father and uncles didn't have time to help the neighbors, but since he has had his part of the ranch and not nearly as much stock, Mr. Cauhape has swapped help with the neighbors more and more.

The availability of doctors and health care in Hope, Artesia, and Roswell were reviewed. When Mr. Cauhape was growing up every three or four years the family would take a trip to Montana or California. Although there wasn't much leisure time, his family belonged to the country club and they swam a lot. Mr. Cauhape played basketball in high school. His parents subscribed to newspapers and magazines, and he still likes to read the magazines and newspapers.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

Mr. Cauhape discussed range and crop management, and the fact that it seems that even though there is a much larger population now than years ago, people seems to have forgotten where their food comes from, so there are now many obstacles to food production and range management like wildlife preservation and insecticide restrictions. Lambs and sheep can't be raised in a pasture with coyotes and wolves.

His parents listened to the 9:00 p.m. news from San Antonio every evening for years, then got television at the ranch in 1954. John and Gloria were married in 1950. John attended the Washington Avenue School, Mrs. Webb's class, in grade school, then Roswell High, and attended New Mexico Military Institute for the last two years of high school and junior college. He went into the army and served in WWII. At this time his father died and he inherited his share of the ranch. He was needed to work on the ranch, so he was not able to continue his education as a veterinarian.

Gloria was from Fort Worth but was working as a nanny in Carizozo. Mr. Cauhape described his courtship of Gloria, who eventually quit the nanny job and worked in Roswell at a law office so he could see her every time he went to town.

John and Gloria had two children, a boy, John Clayte, and a girl, Evelyn Weiss. The son died in a helicopter accident, and the daughter lives in Sherman, Texas. After earning his degree as a petroleum engineer from Texas Tech at the top of his class, the son got a job with Gulf Oil. The son was also a helicopter pilot and instructor and while teaching a student in 1985 there was an accident and the son was killed.

The Cauhapes didn't own a house in Roswell until their children started attending high school. During that time John would come into town on the weekends, or Gloria and the children would go to the ranch on weekends. Education has been a high priority for the whole family, and attending Sunday School and church every week was important.

The elder Mr. Cauhape was a vice-president of the New Mexico Wool Growers for a long time, and John is now a director of the wool growers, attends the convention every year, and is a member of their action committee, which telephones politicians with information about the sheep and wool industry.

Mr. Cauhape believes that the reason people are leaving the ranches and moving into town is the varmints and the ending of the wool incentive program. The wildlife people don't understand that the rancher doesn't want to kill all the wild animals, but they do want to control them and kill only those wild animals that are killing the stock.

The greatest impact on farming and ranching during Mr. Cauhape's lifetime has been the dry years. However, Mr. Cauhape is optimistic about the future of farming and ranching and believes there will be a few good weather years and that the government will help with a varmint control program.

Mr. and Mrs. Cauhape recommended that this Museum interview the Ron Merritts, who ranch near Ramon, but whose mailing address in Yesso. They also recommended Jewel and Ernest Perez of Encino.

John shows a map of France and points out Pau, the capital of the province of Bearn in the south of France, where his father was born and reared.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

Marcie Palmer explains the Standard Agreement for Release of Documentary Material and that the tape and the transcription will be archived at New Mexico State University.