



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Earl Ray Forehand

DATE OF BIRTH: April 12, 1928 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: May 22, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Forehand residence, Carlsbad, NM

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: November 3, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Jane O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: October 2, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Forehand family history, including settlement in New Mexico. The interview also covers the consultant's work in founding the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

DATE RANGE: Circa 1860 to 1996.

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

The Consultant is the President of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation (NMFRHF). His great-great-grandparents immigrated to New Mexico from Texas, and eventually settled on the Black River in what is now Eddy County, New Mexico. His Great-Grandfather Lockhart fought in the Union Army during the Civil War, and following the war it became difficult to live in Texas due to the strong pro-Confederate feelings that existed there.

The consultant is writing a fictionalized account of his family history. Family history was not discussed with him much while he was a child, and much of the documentary and artifactual history of the family was lost in a series (five) of house fires.

Initially when the consultant's family settled in New Mexico they raised horses. They sold colts to both the United States and Mexican cavalry. Eventually horses became less profitable, and they were "real hard on the land, too." The ranch was not fenced until the enactment of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934. By 1905 the family had started raising cattle, "Texas cattle." Eventually, they raised Hereford cattle, now Forehand raises black baldy, primarily because "that type of country down here won't support a large animal." Forage consists of sawgrass and alkali sacatone.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Forehand describes that his great uncle-by-marriage, Albert Johnson, ran the mail route between Toyah, Texas, and Seven Rivers, New Mexico. He had an irrigated farm on the Black River.

Discusses early family memories of Carlsbad Caverns, and his own memories of visits to the Caverns before they became such a significant tourist destination.

The consultant attended public school in Carlsbad, and graduated from New Mexico State University in 1950 with a degree in animal husbandry and a minor in agricultural economics.

Forehand then recounts memories of World War II, when part of their ranch, owned by the Bureau of Land Management, was used by the Army as a practice bombing range.

He was the first generation of his family to attend university. He married in 1953 and has one child. Forehand's father died in 1961, and he eventually bought the ranch from his mother. For seven years following graduation from college, Forehand taught farmers and ranchers efficient business practices through the Veterans' Farm Training Program. The program was financed through the G. I. Bill and the participants attended class twice a week and received in return a monthly stipend of \$90.00.

The consultant described his memories of the drought of the 1930s. He remembers gathering cattle and that were then shot by "a government man" with a .22 rifle. He believes the ranchers benefited from the five or ten dollars they were paid for the cattle. Plus, it cut down on the number of cattle and eventually improved the condition of the range, which had been overgrazed. He also describes seeing his father and grandfather trying to hoist cattle up on their feet using a tripod so they could eat.

Forehand states that the drought in New Mexico in the 1990s does not compare with the drought of the 1950s. In the 1950s, they completely ran out of forage, and sold off all of their livestock. The drought

began in the early 1950s and did not end in the southeaster corner of the state until 1958 or '59. As of 1996 Forehand states they have already experienced four years of drought conditions; however, the stocking rate is not as "heavy" as it was in the past, as "people are more conscious of the rangeland."

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

The consultant first became involved with the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation [NMFRHF] when he registered his ranch with their heritage farm and ranch program. Then he was eventually contacted by Dr. Bill Stephens, who asked if he would be in "charge" of fund raising in the southeastern "sector" of the state. (Prior to that he had been interviewed by a person from Cargill Associates, who had been hired to determine the level of support in New Mexico for an agricultural museum. Forehand told him that he would assist with the project.) Dr. Stephens and the chairs from each sector of the state met several times. He believes there were five sectors, southeast, southwest, central, northwest, and northeast. He states that this strategy was not successful. He was unable to find anyone who was willing to participate as county chairpeople. Dr. Stephens came over to Carlsbad for three or four days and they traveled together, but still with no success. He states that many people were not interested in the project because there was nothing concrete, such as a building, and all they had to offer people was the arrangements that had been made with New Mexico State University to lease a small piece of land.

The entire experience was very "disheartening," but later when he was approached to be a member of the NMFRHF board, he agreed to serve. Forehand states that when he went on the board they "had trouble getting attendance to our board." He states "finally" a museum board was appointed by the governor. He does not remember the specifics of arriving at the decision to have the Museum placed under the State of New Mexico, Office of Cultural Affairs. He states that not long after the Museum board was formed, Dr. Stephens was removed from the presidency of the NMFRHF, because he was now a member of the Museum board.

The consultant describes that Bruce King, then governor of the state, met with the NMFRHF board and told them that if they wanted to build the museum, "You'd better get the money while I'm in there because there may not be another governor in there that's sympathetic to it." He states that the present governor, Gary Johnson, had recommended placing the Museum under New Mexico State University. The consultant does not believe that would have been a positive move.

Forehand gives Edson Way, Museum Director, a great deal of credit for his vision in expanding the programming and facilities of the Museum. He also credits Lana Dickson, Acting Foundation Director, for the work she has done.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

He does not feel that the ten years that the Museum was under development was an inordinately long time. The former officer of the Office of Cultural Affairs, Helmuth Naumer, had warned that it would take some time.

Ranchers and farmers are used to having many factors (weather, prices) that are beyond their control, "You got to be able to role with the punches." He stated that his grandfather told him two things which he has followed. The first was not to try to ship cattle to other pastures during a drought. His grandfather saw that happen in 1917 or 1918 when under a government program cattle were shipped to Mexico; many ranchers went broke as a result of the program. His second caution was never to mortgage the land, because if you lose your land "you're finished."

Forehand believes that they have met the biggest challenge in getting the Museum building built. He doesn't foresee problems in getting the legislature to fund operating costs, and believes that private fund raising will also be easier because the Museum building has been built.

He is concerned that the Museum help to educate the public about agriculture, and hopes that agriculturists and environmentalists will reach some agreements.