

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Carl Lawrence (Larry) Foster

DATE OF BIRTH: April 29, 1944 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: November 10, 1999 through January 12, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum

INTERVIEWER: Marcie Palmer

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: February 14, 2000

NUMBER OF TAPES: Four

ABTRACTOR: Marcie Palmer

DATE ABSTRATED: February 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Foster family ranching history in southwestern New Mexico and Larry Foster's career as a Beef Specialist with the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service.

DATE RANGE: 1870 – present.

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Two Metcalfe brothers, Larry's great grandfather, James Keith, and his brother, Robert, came to New Mexico in 1869 and 1870 and homesteaded near Silver City. They built a ranch on the birthplace of Mangas Colorado, an Apache chief, who was killed in 1863. Consequently, they named their ranch Mangas Ranch. The Metcalfes were miners, then farmed, and raised livestock. They discovered copper mines at Clifton and Morenci, Arizona, and discovered other mines in the Burro Mountains. They also worked the mines in Pinos Altos. They raised sheep and goats.

Larry's grandfather was Orrick Metcalfe. He graduated from N.M.S.U., at that time N.M.A.&M., in 1902 with a bachelor's degree in botany. He earned his masters degree in 1904. He had one of the first car dealerships in Silver City. His wife was Pearl Parks from Lake Valley, N.M., who graduated in the first class from N. M. Teacher's College (Western) at Silver City. She ran a boarding house in Silver City. Orrick's car dealership business went under during the Depression, and he went back into mining. He then lost part of the ranch. Larry's grandparents had four children: a son, Larry's mother Madeline, and twin girls. The son was killed in accident at the mine at Pinos Altos, and Orrick was also killed in an accident in 1934 in the Pinos Altos mine. Pearl lived to be 103 years old.

Larry's mother, Madeline Metcalfe, attended U.C.L.A.

Larry's father was Fred Warren Foster. His family homesteaded near Hollene, N.M. (in the Clovis area) in 1904. Fred Warren went to New Mexico Teacher's College (Western). Larry's parents married in 1934. Both were teachers at the time in Mimbres. They had three boys: Don, born in 1936 now living in California; Bob, born in 1940, died in the '80's of cancer, and Larry, born in 1944. Larry graduated from high school in 1962 and attended college at Colorado State University, where he received his Bachelors degree in 1966. He received a Masters degree in 1968 and a PhD in 1970, both from the University of Nebraska. His degrees are in Animal Nutrition. He worked at Oregon State University at the Squaw Butte Experiment Station in Burns, Oregon for three and a half years. He then went to work for the N.M.S.U. Extension Service in January 1974, as the Beef Cattle Specialist. In his spare time he helped his father run the ranch. Larry retired in 1995 and resides in Las Cruces.

Larry has one son, Dean, who lives at the ranch and attends Western New Mexico University, and an adopted daughter, Shannon, who also attends W.N.M.U. Their mother, Charlotte, lives in Albuquerque. Larry's second wife is Dorothy Campbell.

Larry's parents, Fred Warren and Madeline, moved to the ranch in 1941. Fred continued teaching, and they lived on the ranch the rest of their lives. Fred was Grant County Superintendent of Schools in the early '50's; it was an elected position. He urged Grant County School consolidation in '54. He also taught in Bayard and was a principal. He served in the New Mexico State Legislature for sixteen years and introduced the teachers' retirement bill. Altogether he taught 36 years, and retired in the early 70's. He died in 1986. Larry's mother worked with the Eastern Star and Rainbow Girls. They raised milk cows and chickens. His mother got the proceeds from the sale of milk and eggs. She lived until 1993.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

The first ranch home was built in the bottomland. They had problems with mosquitoes, so they later built a home up on the mountain. That home burned and the only things saved were a grand piano and rolltop desk that had come from Texas in a wagon in the 1870's. Then they built a two-story adobe with walls three feet thick. They built a barn to protect the cattle from Indian attack, but the Apaches never attacked the home or barn.

The house, located on Blacksmith Creek, has been added on to twice. In the 1880's it was a stage stop on the stage line ending in Mogollon. Mangas Creek runs through the land, also. Neither creek has ever gone dry. James Metcalfe hauled wagonloads of pots (American Indian pottery) into Silver City to sell. In 1961-62 they leveled the land and found lots of pottery and metates and manos. The Metcalfe collection is in the museum at Western N.M.U. at Silver City.

During the Depression until approximately 1939, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had a camp on the ranch. Larry's father taught at the camp.

Electricity was put into the ranch in the 1940's. The family began using automobiles and pickups about that same time.

Larry started working at five or six years of age. His first job was to bring in the cows for milking. He talks about life in the country and how things have changed—e.g. fencing materials, branding methods, and the use of pickup trucks and gooseneck trailers. With the creeks running through the ranch there was no need for windmills. Santa Lucia Springs later became Mangas Creek.

They hauled water to the house until the 1940's, when it was piped in.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

The Gila weather station was located on the ranch from 1941 until 1986, when it was moved to a neighboring ranch/farm about a mile away. Weather records have been kept since 1894.

Fred Warren started cross breeding Hereford and Angus cattle in the late 1950's. In those days cattle buyers were less interested in purchasing crossbred cattle, and the price they received for the cattle reflected that attitude. Now, 40 years later, crossbred cattle are preferred.

Presently the Foster ranch contains 19 acres of farmland, and they run approximately 50 mother cows at the ranch.

Mangas Ranch brands were five crosses, Flying U. (or 7 U backwards, 7 running connected). Fred Warren's was F.W/ (FW slash).

Larry's Grandfather Foster died in a tractor accident in the Clovis area, and Fred Warren operated the wheat farm in eastern N. M. (Clovis area) owned by his wife's family. In the 1950's-60's this land was put into the Soil Bank (conservation program).

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

The Fosters hired farm laborers to clean, hoe weeds, and build fences. These individuals came to the ranch looking for employment.

The children rode the school bus or attended school where their dad was teaching or a principal.

In earlier times they took cattle to market in a bob tail truck, then eventually a gooseneck trailer, or sometimes in a semi truck. In the drought of 1994, they sold all the cattle but began to buy back cattle the next year. Before the advent of pickup trucks or semi trucks the Fosters drove their cattle to the nearest railhead, first in Deming and later in Silver City. Cattle market fluctuations did not affect their ranch because the Fosters all had non-ranch sources of income and did not depend solely on the cattle for their livelihood.

The ranch leases approximately 200 acres of public land (Bureau of Land Management). The permit has always been renewed to this date.

Grandmother Foster came and made lye soap once a year. It would last a year.

Larry's father helped to establish the Grant County fair.

Growing up on the farm Larry did not have much leisure time. They did not have TV at the ranch until he left for college in 1962. After school he did chores and schoolwork, had supper and then it was time for bed. During the summer he sometimes had extra time to ride bike with the neighbor boy.

Neighbors helped neighbors then and still do today, for example, when they pregnancy test cows, and during roundup and branding. At other times friends from town would come to help for the day, to get a good home-cooked meal, but they were not necessarily ranchers.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

Other ranches in the area have gone out of business due to mining. When the mine at Tyrone reopened in the 1950's the mining company bought up land for water rights. The company was called "Pacific Western Land and Cattle Company." They did not want people to know that Phelps Dodge was in actuality purchasing the land.

The ranch was a good place for a boy to grow up. However, the neighbors that were ranching when Larry was a child are no longer in the business.

The mining company built a mill in the 1970's, and it closed in 1995. Since the mill closed, and the mines are not using as much water in their leaching operation, they are planting grass for cattle feed and now lease some of the land.

Some big impacts on ranching during Larry's lifetime: government, cross breeding of cattle, disease control in animals, the way the range is managed, and screw worm elimination.

Quality of life on the ranch is perhaps better because of running water, electricity, telephones, and TV. But what was good then is still good now.

Ranching is an uphill battle due to two things: the government and environmentalists. Larry specifically mentions the Forest Service, BLM, the impact of the Wilderness Act, and vacant permits. Larry discusses again changes in the ranching industry, which include maximizing the heterosis factor, improved animal nutrition, implants, cross breeding, disease control, vaccines, pouron, ear tags, solar pumps, and electric fences. Electric fences are easier and cheaper. They are now switching to solar pumps to replace windmills. The solar systems are easy to work on and more reliable.

The Range Improvement Task Force was initiated in 1976. Larry served on the first committee.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

The consultant believes that the sheep industry for many producers is a “losing game.” Many sheep ranchers have gone out of business. He states that the same thing could happen to the cattle industry.

There has been a tremendous increase in dairies in N. M.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A:

Larry Foster describes his career with the New Mexico Extension Service. (4 H and FFA were not available where he lived and went to school.) In January 1974, Larry began his service as a Beef Cattle Specialist at N.M.S.U. Extension Service.

His colleagues at the Extension Service were Barry Youngdahl, Charlie Holmes, Gene Aught, Bob Countersmith, Gordon Hough, Lord Mayles, Jim Sachse, and Jerry Schickedanz.

Larry spoke of skills he brought to the job and skills he learned from the job, some pleasures, what he enjoyed least, the humorous things, changes that took place, problems that were addressed, and fond memories. He would tell a young person interested in working in the Extension Service that you must be a people-oriented person and dedicated. It is not a big money field.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE B: Blank