



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Grace Wright

DATE OF BIRTH: March 22, 1900 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: September 15, 1997 and November 7, 1997

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Sunshine Haven Retirement Home, Lordsburg, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM_ x OTHER_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: October 1, 1998

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: January 10, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Fair. Some ambient noise, as the taping was completed at a communal living facility.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: The consultant's family owned an irrigated farm on the New Mexico/Arizona border.

DATE RANGE: 1900-1997

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

The consultant was born March 22, 1900 in Franklin, Arizona. Her grandmother (identified later in the interview as Pauline Kirsten Polsen) at age fifteen immigrated to the United States from Denmark with a group of missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Her parents were married in Safford, Arizona. She believes they moved from Utah and settled there.

Wright describes an incident from her childhood during which a cattle rancher shot her dog very close to where she was standing. This incident frightened her father to the extent that he “practically gave the place away,” and moved first to Franklin, Arizona, and then to the Animas Valley in New Mexico.

On the irrigated farm at Safford they raised corn and a variety of fruit trees. She states there were about twelve families who moved to the Safford area and settled. When she was five years old her mother died, perhaps due to complications from a miscarriage. After her mother’s death, Grace and her three sisters were sent to live with relatives while her brothers stayed with her father.

After the move to Animas her father raised cattle. He milked cows by hand and sold the milk door-to-door in Steins, New Mexico.

She describes meeting her husband at a Fourth of July get-together at a neighbor’s place. They were married in 1922. Her husband was a World War I veteran. She relates some incidents that her husband told her about the war. (This reminds her that during World War II her daughter, Olive, and she served as airplane spotters. They would climb a fifty-foot tower to watch for airplanes.)

Wright relates an anecdote about her father trading the piano, won by her sister in a drawing contest, for the ranch at Animas. The ranch was five miles from town and there were no close neighbors.

Before her marriage the consultant worked as a telephone operator in the mining town of Duncan, Arizona.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

She also worked in Hayden, Arizona for the telephone office while living with her sister. She lived in a boarding house for a while, and thought she had contracted a disease, however, it was only bed bugs!

She describes the ranch and buildings that her husband-to-be owned with his brother and father near Animas, New Mexico. She relates several anecdotes from the time her husband and she lived on this ranch. They lost the ranch during the Depression because they couldn’t make the payments. Her husband went to work on a road construction project in Young, Arizona. (She relates incidents that occurred while they were living there.)

Wright’s first daughter, Olive, was born in 1923, and her daughter, Opal, was born in 1924. Her third child, Isabelle, was born seven years later. She didn’t work outside with her husband while they were on the ranch, because the two older children were young and born close together.

After working road construction for a year or two, the Wrights moved back to Lordsburg and started a café, although the couple did not have any previous experience in the restaurant business. They were not happy running the café, and eventually purchased a grocery store in Lordsburg. She liked living in town because she had hot running water. She believes they had more access to fresh meat and vegetables in

town. The only way they had of keeping milk and fresh meat while on the ranch was storing it in a cooler covered with canvas near their windmill. If the canvas was kept wet, milk could be kept fresh.

Wright again relates some anecdotes or incidents that occurred while her husband and she lived on their ranch. Their closest neighbor lived eight miles from them “on horseback.” She was lonely on the ranch, although for a short period of time her husband’s brother and his wife lived near them on the ranch.

After her husband and she sold the store they owned in Lordsburg, they operated a service station. Her husband’s family owned a dairy in Lordsburg, but it was before she had met her spouse-to-be.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

She states that the pony express made stops in Silver City, Knight’s Canyon, and Shakespeare. Wright states that when her husband and she lived on the ranch they went to town once a month to purchase staples (coffee, flour, and sugar) and pick up the mail.

Consultant discusses again her father’s life-changing decision to sell their irrigated farm and move to the ranch near Animas. The income from the two businesses was “about the same.”

She briefly describes the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. She states she was baptized twice, because records had been lost. On the occasion of her second baptism, “they dunked me three times because my toe showed or something else.”

She describes the impact of the influenza epidemic of 1918. Both she and her sister, Cora, had the influenza, and her father was in bed with an arthritis flare-up. Finally her aunt traveled fifty miles to take care of them, on the “strength” of a dream she had about Grace and Cora’s mother. Her aunt provided them with nourishing vegetables and fruit, a change from the candy and cakes they had been eating, and they recovered. She relates that her brother died young as a result of Bright’s disease. She sewed her children’s clothes on a treadle sewing machine and washed their clothes on a scrub board.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

This interview was conducted on November 7, 1997, for the purpose of videotaping and recording Mrs. Wright singing several old songs: “I’m Going to Write to Daddy,” “Billy Venero,” “Utah Carol,” and “Up, Up in the Sky.” She remembers most of these songs from when she was a teenager (1915 or 1916) although, she believes “Up, Up in the Sky” was a song her mother may have sung to her.

She relates many of the same anecdotes of family history, her life on her father’s ranch, and ranching with her husband, as were recorded on September 15, 1997. However, as a rule, she offers more detail and is clearer about the time sequence during this interview.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

She relates an incident that occurred when she thought one of her daughters was suffering an appendicitis attack. She rubbed her daughter with liniment, causing her to “buck like a burro.” That seemed to shift something inside of her, so that when her husband arrived at the ranch with the doctor the daughter was no longer in pain.

Her daughter, Olive, was born at “Dr. DeMoss’ Hospital” in Lordsburg (this contradicts information provided during the interview of September 15, 1997.) She describes several anecdotes from her childhood.