

**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & RANCH  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Dorothy "Tudy" Ake

DATE OF BIRTH: September 11, 1931 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: October 17, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Ake residence in rural Datil, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSCRIBED: YES: April 19, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Jane O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: October 6 & October 10, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Briefly describes her personal history. The majority of the interview describes her and her late husband's involvement with the establishment of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

DATE RANGE: 1930-1996

## **ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):**

### **TAPE ONE, SIDE A:**

The consultant's husband, Marvin Ake, was on the earliest board of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation [NMFRHF]. Mr. Ake died in 1994.

She was born in Dalhart, Texas, in 1931 and moved with her family to Lovington, New Mexico, in 1936. She attended public school in Lovington, and went to college at West Texas State, and then transferred to the University of New Mexico. Ake married Bobby Lee, a Western artist and rancher from Horse Springs, New Mexico, after her graduation from university. After her divorce from Mr. Lee, the consultant moved to Silver City, where she taught ten years as a physical education instructor at the high school. She has four children.

Her parents were not agriculturists; however, her first husband, Bobby Lee, was a descendant of Oliver Lee. The Lees are a longtime ranching family from the Alamogordo area.

She married Marvin Ake in 1975, and moved to the ranch where she presently resides. Ake states that her husband "felt very close to the land and it was so very hard for him to come by because he didn't inherit. He had to get it the hard way."

Discusses that they raise black baldy cattle on the ranch, because they "produce great."

A woman named Suzanne Dean is working on a book about Marvin Ake. He recorded some of his history before his death, and she has these tape recordings. Ms. Dean also inherited from her father many historic-era photographs of Magdalena, New Mexico.

The consultant states that Dr. Bill Stephens and Lana Dickson were the first people who approached them about the idea of starting a heritage museum. Marvin Ake also knew Max Evans, another early board member; they had collaborated on a book, *Super Bull*.

Ake describes the fund raising consultant who was hired. She states that her husband, Marvin, "fought the board" about the decision to hire this firm. Marvin felt the framework for fund raising that was proposed by the consultant was "too confining for him." He also felt that the "firm wanted too much money, that they couldn't afford to do it that way." However, he also "opposed getting the money from the legislature, because he didn't want the government to have that much control over the Museum." Although this was a strong objection, "he never did really quit," but "threatened back and forth" with Dr. Bill Stephens.

### **TAPE ONE, SIDE B:**

The consultant discusses some of the proposed locations for the Museum; an early proposal was to place the museum on the campus of New Mexico State University (NMSU). At one point Marvin Ake advocated for a "big metal building so that they could have the storage . . . because people are not inclined to give you anything for a museum if you haven't any place to put it."

She discusses the trip that the board made to Fort Stanton when there was a proposal to place the Museum there.

The consultant states that the “immediate board” was asked to personally sign notes for a loan to “start the fund raising going.” She states that some board members agreed to sign the notes and some didn’t, “so that was sort of a tender spot.” She describes this period in the development of the Museum as a “tough time.” “Everybody was wanting something different and nobody had this one great idea . . . to work toward.”

She describes the first architectural plans that were drawn for the Museum. They did not like the plan, which she describes as a building constructed of “river rocks.” It did not seem to her to be in character with the Southwestern setting.

She relates that at one point “all these people were gonna quit . . . they were ’cause they had members on the board that never showed up.” Marvin said if board members miss “so many meetings, then they should be automatically dropped.” Ake states that she was “disappointed” that there were not “young, very industrious” people on the board, as there was “so much enthusiasm” from them, but they were “just brushed . . . aside.”

The consultant states that not many people in the area know about the Museum. She planned to talk to her neighbors about purchasing a brand block to be placed in the Museum courtyard; however, she is reluctant to do so because such an expense is “frivolous in their life when they’re having trouble having . . . enough grass to raise their cattle.”

She refers several families in the area to the oral history program. The Harriet and Bruton families were partners in a large ranch with her late husband, Marvin.

### **TAPE TWO, SIDE A:**

Ake discusses that she and her husband were not involved in the Museum at the time there was a problem with the bids to hire an architect to draw up plans for the building. She was surprised on a recent trip to Las Cruces to see how far construction has proceeded with the Museum building. A discussion follows as to a proposed date (Christmas 1997) for the Museum to open.

In regard to the debate over a Museum logo, Ake states that her husband thought they should “use the cowboy,” because that’s what “attracts people.” The consultant stated her husband would give the farmers a “bad time,” and “rag ’em up and down.” She stated about her husband, “if they wanted his opinion and they asked, they’d get it.” Ake describes the difficult times the board had in making some decisions and said, “Marvin had threatened to quit and Bill Stephens said, well, he’d quit . . . and then they’d go have a drink and forget it.”

Ake believes “the most important thing” that has changed the direction of the Museum was when Dr. Edson Way was hired as Museum Director.

Discussed how to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Stephens, not, she stated, by naming the Museum after him, but by giving him credit in some way.

The consultant states that she feels it is important that the Museum host statewide meetings of agricultural groups, as well as more personal events. These are methods to make the public aware of the Museum and get them involved.

### **TAPE TWO, SIDE B:** Blank