



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: William D. Stalls

DATE OF BIRTH: October 9, 1924 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: January 24, 1997

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Stalls residence, Albuquerque, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: January 20, 1998

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: December 20, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Briefly discusses personal history, and in more detail his involvement in the cattle industry as a cattle buyer. The majority of the interview focuses on the founding of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum (hereafter NMF&RHM).

DATE RANGE: 1924-1997

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

William Stalls is a member of the NMF&RHM Board. He was born in Texas in 1924. His parents were wheat farmers and raised beef cattle in Texas.

Although Stalls did not move to New Mexico until 1968, he was very familiar with the state, because he bought cattle from ranchers living in the northeastern corner of New Mexico.

The consultant became interested in history, in part, through his contacts with many of the old cowboys who lived in West Texas while he was growing up.

Stalls graduated from Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, in 1949, and received a masters degree in animal husbandry (meat's department) from Kansas State University in 1952. After graduation he worked in the packing industry, buying fat cattle. He moved to Clovis, New Mexico, in 1968 when Missouri Beef Packers built a new plant on the New Mexico/Texas border. He retired in 1991.

He mainly bought cattle out of the Clovis, New Mexico, and Friona, Texas, area; however, he had two additional feedlots he bought from in New Mexico – Governor King's feedlot [Stanley] and the NAPI feedlot in Farmington.

Stalls discusses at length the changes he has witnessed in the feedlot/packing phase of the cattle industry. At present, there are four major packers left in the business. Many feedlot operators have moved their operations from northern states to Texas and Kansas, because the "cost of grain's much cheaper in the wintertime" in the more southern states. Some feedlots are consigning ten to twelve thousand head of cattle per week to the large packers.

The feedlot industry in New Mexico is concentrated around Clayton and Clovis. In 1968, when the large feedlot was built at Friona, Texas, the Roswell, New Mexico, feedlot fed about 70,000 cattle; now they no longer have feedlots there.

Stalls describes the work of an order buyer in the cattle business. He discusses the impact of droughts in New Mexico on cattle prices. He believes that NAFTA will have a positive impact on the cattle market.

Discusses some of the job pressures he experienced as assistant vice president of procurement for the Friona plant. He then discusses the impact of changing cattle breeds on the packing business. The packers want a standard weight animal, as their machinery is geared to a certain weight and size.

Stalls is married and has three children.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Stalls is a member of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation and the New Mexico Cattle Growers which supports the NMF&RHM. He continues to raise some livestock and still buys a few cattle on commission. He is not feeding any cattle at the present time due to drought conditions.

The interview now focuses on Stalls' part in the founding of the NMF&RHM. He was appointed to the first NMF&RHM Board by Governor King in 1991, prior to his appointment he wasn't aware that plans

were being made to build a museum. He was appointed as one of three public members of the board, although the public members also had agricultural backgrounds.

His work on the board was comprised of fund raising, both from private sources and from the legislature. When trying to raise money in the Clovis area he found that people were unaware of the plan to build an agricultural museum. Some people had the attitude that if the NMF&RHM was going to be located in Las Cruces then “let Las Cruces build it.” He states, “. . . I didn’t get a big reaction out of people over in Clovis/Portales area, as far a raising money.” He moved to Albuquerque four years ago.

Stalls states that the legislators he talked to about the project were receptive, because they were interested in garnering votes from their rural constituencies. Now, however, Stalls is working to gain the urban vote. He describes the period when the legislature appropriated \$105,000 with the provision that two-thirds of it be raised from local sources, as a “crucial” time. “We were either gonna go forward or flop at that point.”

He describes Governor King’s contribution to and support of the project. Raising money for the NMF&RHM had been difficult, because there was no museum building or anything for people to see their money going to. He states that the NMF&RHM has been “tagged” a “southern New Mexico cowboy museum” by some people.

Stalls addresses the problem in the procedures to award the bid for the architectural drawings of the museum building. He does not feel that this problem had long-term consequences, except that it slowed the process down. He has been very happy with the work of the architect, David Dekker, who was finally chosen.

He was not opposed to moving the building from the eleven-acre site near the New Mexico State University golf course to the present site.

He then discusses Governor Johnson’s suggestion to move the NMF&RHM from the Office of Cultural Affairs to New Mexico State University in 1995. Stalls discussed this in the larger context of Governor Johnson’s desire to “dissolve” the board. He was opposed to this plan because he believes the boards play an important role in providing “citizen input” to governmental entities.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

The board of the NMF&RHM did not accept reimbursement for travel expenses as a way of minimizing costs. Discusses the NMF&RHM’s missions of preserving artifacts and history and in education, which, he believes, go “hand in hand.”

Discusses some ways the board could commemorate the contribution of some of the early influential “founders” of the NMF&RHM, including Dr. Stephens, Dr. Thomas, and Helmuth Naumer, Officer of Cultural Affairs.

Stalls believes the biggest challenge facing the NMF&RHM today is in obtaining funding for exhibits. He states that either Helmuth Naumer or Edson Way had told the board that museums can not depend on funding from “\$25 memberships.” He believes under Dr. Way’s directorship the NMF&RHM can be an “unusual” agricultural museum, and not just a display of “farm machinery.”

TAPE TWO, SIDE B: Blank