



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Paul Stout

DATE OF BIRTH: May 2, 1966 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: November 18, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: New Mexico Department of Agriculture office
Las Cruces, NM

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM x OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: November 24, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: September 18, 1996

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Fair. The recording is clear, but soft in volume.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Details Paul Stout's service on the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation, and briefly his family history and thoughts on technological innovations in farming.

DATE RANGE: 1909-1996

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Paul Stout was nominated to serve on the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation Board in 1995. He was born May 2, 1966, in Clovis and was reared on his parents' farm near Broadview. He attended Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. In the Broadview area, wheat and milo are dry land farmed, and cattle are also reared. The Stout farm had no irrigated acres.

The Stout farm was established in 1909 when Paul Stout's grandfather homesteaded a quarter of land. Stout is the third generation to farm the land.

Stout attended kindergarten through high school at Grady. At university he majored in finance and his minor was economics. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

When he entered university he was unsure about whether he wanted to be a farmer; however, he had purchased some land and felt he needed to take care of it. Eventually, he bought more land and stayed on the farm.

In addition to farming, Stout is also training to do legislative work (lobbying) for the Farmers Union. He is also involved in economic development in Curry County, where they are attempting to establish a cooperative flourmill. He became interested in this project through his efforts to restore a flourmill that operated in Curry County from 1910-1988.

The consultant states that he is not surprised that fund raising from the private sector has been challenging. He states that public funding is a balance between the "necessary mandatory services the state government has to provide" and discretionary funding.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

In discussing the mission of the Museum to preserve the heritage and history of New Mexico agriculture, Stout discusses the impact of the Conservation Reserve Program that was initiated in 1985. The program had the effect of allowing a number of farmers to retire on the rental income generated when erodible land was removed from production. He believes the C.R.P. was effective in Curry County in bringing back much "wildlife habitat" and in controlling "wind and water erosion."

The consultant discusses the new farm program that until 2002, will give farmers a "fixed payment," rather than yearly deficiency payments. It allows farmers the freedom to choose what they want to plant. He believes the farm program is designed to encourage farmers to "look at alternative marketing plans." He states that at least in eastern New Mexico these changes will result in squeezing out small family farms. To "meet increasing cost and burdens" the consultant believes a farmer will have to farm "at least two sections of land."

Due to the expense of the chemicals, Stout has not used no-till farming, but has adopted the strategy of minimum tillage, a combination of herbicide use and tilling. In sum, he believes farming has evolved in the past twenty years from a "labor-oriented" business to a "decision-making, strategy-oriented business."

In regard to people who have had a major impact on the planning and direction of the Museum since he became a board member, he states that Dr. Edson Way, Museum Director, and Lana Dickson of the Foundation have "done a tremendous amount of work in trying to advance this project."

Stout discusses the time that it will take to develop the Museum.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

In the future he would like to see smaller “specialized facilities” of the Museum in various places around the state. He discusses two such facilities, the old flourmill that he is working on preserving and the Chase Ranch project in which the foundation has been involved.

He states that funding for the Museum will be a combination of public and private monies. He is unsure about the attitude of his local legislators, as two incumbents were defeated in the election just held.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B: Blank