



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Henry Torres

DATE OF BIRTH: November 11, 1937 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: June 25, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Torres residence, Silver City, NM

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: May 13, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRACTED: May 4, 1999

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good and clear, but with an occasional flaw in the tape.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Torres discusses personal history including some information about his work as a brand inspector. He describes the impact of the drought of the 1990's and low cattle prices on cattle ranching. Discusses his involvement with the museum, its mission, and his vision of its development.

DATE RANGE: 1937 - 1996

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Born in Dwyer (Now, Faywood, New Mexico) in 1937. His father later purchased a ranch near Deming where he was reared from age six onward.

His father and mother both came from the Mesilla Valley. His father's family came south to the Mesilla Valley from Sandoval County, and then moved west to the Mimbres Valley with a group of settlers. This group (four or five families) was the first non-American Indian settlers of the Mimbres.

After serving in the military, he went to work for the Cattle Sanitary Board and worked for about six years. He then raised cattle in the Deming area, and in 1970, established an auction market in Socorro with a partner. In 1974, the partnership was dissolved and he returned to work for the, now, New Mexico Livestock Board.

Describes responsibilities of working for the New Mexico Livestock Board. The diseases of tuberculosis and brucellosis and the scabies parasite have always been, and continue to be, of the greatest concern to the livestock industry.

The Livestock Board has divided the state into four administrative areas, and these are subdivided into districts (usually counties or trade areas).

Described what he remembered of the drought of the 1950's, when he was a teenager. His father was forced to liquidate his cattle herd, and he then put in a farm.

He discusses the impact of the present drought (1996) and low market prices. He believes that some ranchers who are carrying a heavy debt load, and who are ranching in public lands, may be forced out of the ranching business. In past droughts cattle have been taken from public lands but have been returned when conditions improved. Now, however, there is a great deal of negative sentiment from the public about grazing on public lands and he doesn't think any cattle will be returned to the public lands. Discusses that an environmental group in Silver City has been very active in the movement to remove cattle from public lands. He believes the next five to ten years will be a real transition period for the cattle industry in the West.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Discusses several organizations that he is a member of (Cattle Growers, Farm Bureau). He became involved as a board member of the Silver City Museum, and eventually with the organization of the first New Mexico Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

He details the work with the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Foundation starting in about 1994. He initially completed the term of G.X. McSherry on the Foundation Board, and then was elected to the Board by the general membership.

Discusses his ideas about the mission of the Museum, and the importance of including all the cultures of New Mexico (American Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo) in our interpretation.

He believes that the decision to place the Museum under the Office of Cultural Affairs was a good one. Because of it, people will view the Museum as a statewide effort that encompasses both farming and ranching equally.

Discusses where he expects the Museum to be in five years. He does not believe the Museum will ever be self-supporting.