

**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & RANCH  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Joe Vicente Jr.

DATE OF BIRTH: July 3, 1953                      SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 24, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Vincente ranch near Vaughn, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Jane Loy O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM

TRANSCRIBED: November 13, 1996

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Sylvia Wheeler

DATE ABSTRATED: April 6, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Vincente family's arrival in New Mexico from the Basque area of Spain; cattle and sheep raising; and the founding of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

DATE RANGE: 1900-1996

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

**TAPE ONE, SIDE A:**

Vincente, Jr. was born in Albuquerque N.M. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents came from the Basque region of Spain in the early 1900s. They came to the Vaughn area of New Mexico as shepherders. There were other French and Spanish Basques already established there: the Garde, Nalda, and Perez families among others. Shepherders worked with ranchers on the “partida” system. “It was . . . like a loan, but it wasn’t cash, it was in livestock. Then every year he had to pay the owner, or the man that gave him the sheep . . . ten percent of his lamb crop . . . wool crop . . .,” Vicente says. This sum was equivalent to the principal plus interest and within five years or so, the entire sum was paid back. “La partida” in Spanish means “halfers” or partners.

Some of the Basque families homesteaded, built a central camp, and used the surrounding area for pasture. Eventually they started buying up other homesteaders, and had acquired State and BLM leases by the early 1960s.

Lambing was very labor intensive, today lambing takes place in the pasture; similar to how calving is done. Ultimately, the Vicente family diversified into raising cattle, in part due to labor and predator problems involved in raising sheep.

Vincente attended New Mexico Military Institute for high school and junior college, and graduated from Colorado State University in 1975. Education was important in his family.

**TAPE ONE, SIDE B:**

Recalling his Basque heritage, Vicente says that as many as sixty-five people out of a little Spanish village of perhaps a thousand would immigrate to the U.S. to make money shepherding or in other ways, and then return to Spain. Others chose to make their homes in the United States.

Vincente belongs to an Alumni Association, Cattle Growers, Wool Growers, and a bank board.

He comments that New Mexico is a major wool producing state. He discusses his Rambouillet sheep, and the fact that climate is a major factor in raising sheep. He describes the wool bailing process and says that a bag of wool that is now packed by machine sometimes weighs 400 pounds. He says that central New Mexican wool is relatively dirtier than wool produced in the rockier Picacho/Hondo area. Raising cattle is less labor intensive.

**TAPE ONE, SIDE A:**

Vicente became a member of the Farm and Ranch Museum Foundation Board in the early 1990s. He mentions early conflicts that occurred shortly before and after Dr. Stephens passed away and the Museum was transferred to the Office of Cultural Affairs. He recalls there was a question of where in Las Cruces the Museum would be built and its association with New Mexico State University. He feels that education should perhaps be the Museum’s major purpose.

He agrees that agriculture is in a major transitional period in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Too much good agricultural land is being sold for housing and commerce, he says.

**TAPE ONE, SIDE B:** Blank.