

**NEW MEXICO**  
**FARM & RANCH**  
**HERITAGE**  
**MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**  
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Tommy Bolack

DATE OF BIRTH: April 29, 1951      SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 3, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Bolack residence, Farmington, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

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

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: October 3, 1996

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Sylvia Wheeler

DATE ABSTRATED: March 2, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Briefly describes his personal history. The majority of the interview describes his work in founding the New Mexico Farm and Ranch heritage Museum and his tenure on the Museum Board.

DATE RANGE: 1951-1995

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

### **Tapes One and Two:**

Duane Thomas (Tommy) Bolack from Farmington, New Mexico, has been on the Museum's Board since its inception in 1991 to 1995 when his term was completed. He also served on the Foundation board during this time, while the museum went from fancy to fact.

He was born in Winfield Kansas, April 2, 1951. His family had moved to New Mexico in the '40s. He, like his mother, was born on a Kansas farm. They moved out to New Mexico to look for oil and gas, and found a little then started the B Square Ranch, which Tommy has co-owned and operated for most of his life. It is a 12,000-acre operation where he has practiced advanced agricultural methods, conservation, resource management, and education.

About 60,000 waterfowl, peaking in January, nest on his land. He feeds them about 200 tons of corn and feels he has basically altered the central New Mexico flyway. His 12,000 acres, contains about four and a half miles of the San Juan River, that he has re-channeled to create numerous lakes.

Three rivers, the San Juan, the Animas, and La Plata meet near Farmington. On his property he has found signs of early Indian occupation in the area and evidence of subsistence agriculture of corn, beans and squash.

He is interested in history and has an Electromechanical Museum of 3,000 square feet with agricultural as well as electronic artifacts. His hope is to inform people of the source of their food and of electronic devices. He has thirty years worth of collections.

His interest in the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum (NMFRHM) is also that of revealing the long history of farming and ranching in the Southwestern area. He is also on the Board of Supervisors for the San Juan Soil and Water conservation District, which introduces school children to the history and problems inherent in conservation. He is also on the Aztec Museum Board of Directors.

He and his father channeled the Animas River running through their land and made it into seven lakes for conservation purposes. Because of this, he has a good grove of various trees. Farmington was until 1960, a major producer of apples. "Farming Town" was the original name of the area, he says, and was originally settled by the Mormons.

Bolack's original interest in the NMFRHM came through talking with Dr. Stephens [then with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture] who turned to him as a fund raiser for the prospective museum. He believes that the initial idea and activities came about in 1985. For funding raising purposes the state was divided into four parts. Bolack was the "northwestern" chair. He also served on the Use committee, along with Felicia Thal. They, along with the architect, tried to "get the bugs worked out" of the plans for the Museum building.

He praises Helmuth Naumer, state Officer of Cultural Affairs. Governor Bruce King signed Bill 250 that established the legal basis for the Museum and budgeted \$50,000 in start-up funds. Many consultants were needed for design and for fund raising. The Museum's collection were essential; they also wanted to highlight farms and ranches at least fifty years' old.

Bolack felt it was important that the state's Office of Cultural Affairs owned the Museum even if it was to be built on land leased from New Mexico State University. He discusses the site on Dripping Spring Road and the ideas for the design. There were some arguments as to where the Museum as to be located. While there were arguments about location and other details, Bolack says that fund raising was most important and kept the founders all focused on just getting the Museum at all.

He feels that Dr. Stephens and Helmuth Naumer should be memorialized in some fashion at the Museum, a building or road named for them. He also wishes that the Board members had been recognized at the Museum groundbreaking. He feels that, with endowments, the Museum will someday be self-sustaining.