

**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & RANCH  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Rex Kipp, Jr.

DATE OF BIRTH: December 4, 1933 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: July 31, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: E. J. Short and Sons, Lordsburg, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Mollie Pressler

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

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: February 27, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Sylvia Wheeler

DATE ABSTRATED: April 27, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Recalls prisoners of war employed on his parents' ranch during World War II.

DATE RANGE: 1943-1944

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

### **TAPE ONE:**

Rex Kip, Jr. was born in Lordsburg, New Mexico in 1933 and has lived there all his life. During World War II his family ranched. In the 1940s, because of the war imposed labor shortage they hired prisoners of war (POWs) as ranch laborers. They paid the army five dollars a day for POW labor. The POWs came in groups of five; they would be taught a task, then the camp would send out a new group of POWs to learn. The commandant accepted requests for workers, sending them to work with an armed guard.

The guards had a good relationship with the POWs; when one wanted to ride a horse, he gave his gun to a POW to hold. Except for the few Nazis, the POWs seemed docile.

They hired largely during the branding season for about six months of the year over a period of two years, 1943 and 1944. The family gave the POWs little perks, tobacco, for example, and fed them. The POWs flanked, roped, and dragged calves during branding, and built corrals. One corral still stands.

The Italian POWs said that Rommel whipped them badly. During their retreat they threw away their weapons but kept their guitars, violins and harmonicas as they fled.

In the POW camp, they were treated very well although they had no air conditioning in their barracks. The family was instructed not to talk to the POWs, fraternize, which may be why they kept changing the groups sent. Occasionally, the family also hired migrant workers.

Harry Day's Lazy B ranch (Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's father) also employed POWs.

The camp was well administered. He recalls one attempted escape of eighteen or nineteen POWs trying to get to Argentina.

POWs were used to quarry limestone in the region, which was used for their camp sidewalks, and later taken and used by people in town for various things.

Kipp's grandmother wrote an article about Italian POWs working at the ranch for the *New Mexico Magazine*.