

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Joe Jackson

DATE OF BIRTH: February 10, 1919 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: February 21, 2012

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Consultant's home in Las Cruces, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Donna M. Wojcik

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM

TRANSCRIBED: May 9, 2013

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: February 29, 2012

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Jackson describes his work as a livestock inspector in New Mexico from 1960-1970.

DATE RANGE: 1919-1970

ABSTRACT (Important Topics in Order of Appearance):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Jackson's grandparents moved from Indiana to Julesburg, Colorado in 1896. The trip took four months by wagon. His grandfather moved to the Maxwell, N.M. area to help his brother with his livestock business. Land was better and more accessible in New Mexico than land in Colorado. His grandfather purchased additional homesteaded land that had been abandoned by previous owners along the Little Canadian River. Arrowheads found on the ranch were evidence of past occupation by Native Americans.

Jackson's grandfather ran Hereford cattle on the ranch. Gramma grass provided the cattle with protein in their diet. In the years between 1929 and 1934 a grasshopper infestation cleaned out all the gramma grass in the area. The government supplied poison to kill the grasshoppers but the poison also killed the alfalfa roots and fruit trees in the area. Water came from a small reservoir on the ranch, enough to keep the field crop and fruit trees watered, but the stock was watered from the Little Canadian River when the reservoir was low or dried up completely.

At age fifteen, Jackson was working on a neighboring ranch until he married his wife, Ruth. He discusses his ranching career, time spent in the military, drought, and his school years. He describes his brand, where extra ranch labor came from, and the government job his parents had building stock ponds.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Booms and bust cycles, market fluctuations, and federal programs to aid ranchers during tough times are discussed. Jackson's grandmother sold milk, and he recalls delivering milk before school or in the evenings. Work always came first, and if the work was done then you had time for school. Hogs were raised on the ranch, and he recalls the sugar cured hams that hung in the earth cellar where potatoes, onions and canned goods were stored.

Children were expected to start chores "as long as they could carry a bucket." By the time Jackson was fifteen, he was working for wages as a cowboy. Family activities, illnesses, and leisure activities are discussed. There were always biscuits and gravy at meals, but little variety. He met his wife, who sat in front of him at school, in 1934 and recalls tying knots in her dress sash. Education was not stressed by his parents, and was considered secondary to work. If children needed to be away from school to help on the family ranch or farm, the school year was often extended into the summer to cover the missed days. Churches, politics, and community leaders are briefly discussed.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Jackson tells the story of a rancher who was murdered over a fence dispute. As drought conditions worsened many people abandoned their homesteads to work in factories connected to the war effort. It was a way for them to make more money than they could if they were ranching. He believes that the greatest impact on the ranch industry in the past has been when ranchers could not repay their loans and simply abandoned the land. He states that the industry has changed a lot over the years, and feels that ranchers are more highly educated now than in

the past. This fact does not make the life of a rancher easier though, because they still have to deal with new laws and environmental issues.

During the mid-1600s cattle inspectors were known as range detectives. Jackson began his career as a livestock inspector in 1969, and served in this capacity for thirteen years. Inspectors were required to know the cattle industry and know livestock. He discusses the primary function of a livestock inspector and how cattle are branded on Reservations.

Infectious diseases such as brucellosis, the quarantine of infected animals and herds, and the importance of branding your cattle are discussed. In recent years it has been necessary for inspectors to be escorted by county deputies. When asked why an escort would be needed, Jackson states that “inspectors get threats from people who do not want to adhere to the laws. A lot of people do not understand the law, and try to beat the law.”

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

The importance of checking brands as a way to control cattle rustling requires a lot of “man hours.” Roadblocks are often set up to check for brands and proper certifications. The New Mexico brand laws are “the best in the country” and many other states look to our system as a model for their own brand laws. The computer age has made it easier for the inspector to do his job. In our state, all brands must be recorded and registered with the Livestock Board.

Laws governing inspections of animals entered in a state or county fair were inspected when they come in and also when they left the fair grounds. Jackson recalls that one year someone stole a “fat calf.” They were unable to find out who did it or where the calf ended up. He hopes that there never comes a time when brand laws are done away with because without the brand the ranch identity and ability to control ownership is destroyed.

Current issues that are facing the cattle industry today include the reintroduction of the grey wolf, wild horses and buffalo, and the proposed water pipeline from the San Agustin aquifer are discussed.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

How to dispose of unwanted wild horses and the closing of slaughter houses in the state is briefly discussed. The only way that ranchers will survive is to keep working on the efforts to improve the industry today. Jackson believes that ranchers need to “keep doing what they are doing now.” Fuel and feed costs, and environmentalists are pushing ranchers away from something that feeds the generations, he says. “The younger generation is going to hurt in the future.”

End of Interview