

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Jerry Zachek / Emanuel Vocale

DATE OF BIRTH: April 9, 1934 / January 28, 1913 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: August 30, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Zachek residence, rural Deming

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: April 6, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: April 18, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Employment of German prisoners of war (POWs) on Deming area farms during World War II.

DATE RANGE: 1944-1945

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Vocale's parents began farming in the Deming area in 1928. They started in agriculture as sharecroppers, but eventually purchased the farm where Vocale still resides today. Zachek's parents began farming in the Deming area in 1940. They originally came from Texas to Deming to work in the tuberculosis sanatorium. They raised cotton and pinto beans on the farm, but more cotton during WWII. (Pinto beans increased greatly in price immediately after the war.)

Before the war, relatives of the Zacheks would come from south Texas to assist with the cotton harvest. If farmers had children in school, the children were excused from school in order to help with the harvest. (Right after WWII, Vocale hired neighbor women to work on his farm.)

When Zachek was approximately ten years of age he could pick 250 pounds of cotton (Acala 1517) a day. His father could pick 500 pounds and his mother 400 pounds. Both consultants knew of men who could pick 600 pounds of cotton a day.

Zachek's father transported "twelve to fifteen" POWs and their guard in a trailer pulled behind a car. Some days, Zachek's mother would prepare "chile and beans" for the POWs. Zachek and his two siblings would work alongside the POWs in the same field. The POWs came from the camp at the Deming "airport."

Zachek remembers that on occasion the guard would fall asleep in the cotton trailer. The POWs would come in and weigh their cotton, take his rifle, "make some rounds with it," and then return the rifle.

Zachek remembers talking and joking with the Germans, and some tried to teach him to count in German. (The owners or farm managers were ordinarily expected to weigh the cotton picked by the POWs.)

Discussion of the POWs ability to pick cotton. Vocale explains that on average the POWs were expected to pick 200 pounds of cotton a day. If the group didn't meet the quota, they had to stay at the farm until they did. Some POWs refused to pick and if they couldn't be convinced in any other way, they would be put in solitary confinement. (The POWs picked clean if slow.)

The wage paid to the POWs was established for the entire Deming area. Zachek isn't aware of whether his parents felt that they were receiving a good return for the money they spent on POWs' wages. Vocale states, "We were glad to get dem." Zachek and Vocale remember only German POWs.

Vocale describes going to the compound and contracting for POW labor. This had to be done on a day-to-day basis.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Vocale heard of POWs being employed by a rancher, but cannot remember who the rancher was.

In general, according to Vocale, the townspeople in Deming accepted the POW camp. The army bought supplies from local businesses.

Vocale states the POWs asked him for "potatoes, cigarettes, and, of course, beer." There was a strict observance of the non-fraternization policy on his farm, which he discusses in detail. In his opinion the

POWs were treated well, even though the POWs might have thought otherwise. (Zachek will look for photographs of the POWs; Vocale doesn't think that photographing the POWs was allowed.)

Vocale and Zachek remember employing the POWs only for one year. Following employment of the POWs, Vocale employed conscientious objectors.

When the camp was demobilized, Vocale purchased one of the former POW barracks to use on his farm. There was POW graffiti and drawings on the walls of the barracks that have since been defaced by subsequent farm workers.

Zachek believes that the POWs were lonesome and wanted to be around children. He remembers the POWs singing while they worked.

Vocale compares our treatment of German POWs, with other country's treatment of our soldiers that had been captured.