



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Max Evans

DATE OF BIRTH: August 29, 1924 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: September 26, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Evans residence, Albuquerque, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: December 3, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: Macbeth and O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: April 12, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Personal history and his role in the founding of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum.

DATE RANGE: 1924-1996

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Interview with Max Evans, Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum Foundation Board Vice President took place at his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico on September 26, 1996. Evans was born in Ropes, Texas in 1924. His parents were ranchers and he moved from Texas to New Mexico and back several times. At one point, Max's father dug, by hand, an irrigation well on his place near Hobbs, New Mexico, and grew the first garden produce in the area. Max helped with selling the produce.

At age ten, Max was told to herd several horses from Jal, New Mexico, to Diamond Oklahoma. He was given a map drawn on an old sack and wrapped in waxed paper, three dollars in cash, a saddle, and an "old hand" to accompany him. They lived off the land but never "borrowed" or took more than they needed—a philosophy that is important to this day.

A year later, with both parents' blessings, Max struck out for northern New Mexico to find an uncle and begin a "cowboy" career. The uncle left the area about six weeks later, and he was left to find work on different ranches, which he did for five years.

His mother had been responsible for obtaining books and teaching Max to read.

He joined his parents in Andrews, Texas, to attend high school and play football. When graduation came, an aunt offered to sell him about 1000 acres of ranch land between Raton and Clayton, New Mexico, for \$500.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Ranching did not provide enough income, so Max hired out as day laborer to neighboring ranches and contracted to build fences to earn money. He married and then served in the military during WWII, when he returned from combat he had difficulty settling back into civilian/ranch life. He sold the ranch and moved to Des Moines, New Mexico to paint, a life-long interest and ambition.

Max Evans was mentored by a Potawatomi Indian artist and later went into the mining business with him. (His personal papers were donated to the University of Texas at El Paso.) They were successful in copper and uranium mining in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. But money easily made was easily spent and given away.

Max moved to Albuquerque in 1967. He spent five years in and out of Hollywood getting his book *The Rounders* made into a movie. At the time of the interview, he was working on his twentieth novel.

Frank Dubois invited Evans to a Museum planning meeting. He was told he was a Foundation Board member and felt his own contribution would be his good standing with the press.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Evans set up appointments with journalists from the *Albuquerque Tribune* and the *Journal*. He understood the importance of publicity, and said at an early board meeting, "the politicians won't accept you [Museum project] unless the public accepts it."

Max Evans felt the Museum should be of international interest from the beginning. Europeans and others want to see the "West."

He shared observations of several of the board members with whom he served. And described his reservations about a consultant that was hired early on by the board. Other board members shared these reservations, and Evans believes that events proved them to have been correct.

He discussed the struggle the board faced in raising funds. The creation of the Museum Board was a "tremendous advantage," as long as the Foundation Board "has the final say." However, putting the Museum under the Office of Cultural Affairs went against his nature, but he could see no other way to proceed. The contributions of Helmuth Naumer, of the Office of Cultural Affairs were described, as were those of Dr. Bill Stephens particularly his work during the time when legislation to establish the Museum was being debated in the legislature.

It was more difficult to raise money privately for the Museum than he expected it to be. He could not devise a plan to do so. Perhaps the state of the agricultural economy impacted on the ability to raise funds, especially from people who were raising cattle.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

Evans supported the plan to build the Museum in the southern part of the state; he told the board, "I think the south is the coming part of this state." He also comments on the support that New Mexico State University has given the Museum.

The consultant discusses the controversy that was engendered over the architectural bid process.

He believes the legislature is supportive of the Museum, because of the support it has from agriculturists around the state. Governors Carruthers, King, and Johnson were also supportive of the project. He states that Governor Johnson has funded the Museum while cutting funds to other state projects.

Evans stresses again the importance of getting the media involved in promoting the Museum.

Education of children should be the “number one” goal of the Museum, because then the “rest of it is automatically preserved.”

One of the difficulties with fund raising in New Mexico is that there are not a great many “enormously wealthy people” living in the state. Although Ted Turner owns land in the state, Evans is not certain whether he has been approached (Evans knows Jane Fonda’s father and stepmother, but not Jane).

Again discusses the need to publicize the Museum, both to inform the public and to keep the pressure on “politicians.”

Lana Dickson’s contribution is noted, particularly running the day-to-day operations of the Foundation.

The romance of the “Anasazi and the Hispanics” will be a draw to the Museum, as well as the lure of the “cowboy” mystique. He supported a fellow board member, Marvin Ake, in his early assertion that “nobody ever came to . . . the American West to see a farmer.” However, this position was not a popular one with some of the board members.

He reiterates the “points he feels strongly about” portraying in the Museum: the “Anasazi tradition . . . Anasazi-Hispanic legal tradition, and the international flavor.”

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

The consultant completes his evaluation of the Museum, and the interview is completed.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B: Blank