

**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & RANCH  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Bob Jones (Also present was his wife, Elizabeth Jones.)

DATE OF BIRTH: December 1, 1929 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: October 21, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Bob Jones's ranch home

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

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

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: June 12, 1997

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Sheila Klug

DATE ABSTRACTED: June 16, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Deals principally with his involvement in the founding of the New Mexico Ranch and Heritage Museum beginning with his visit to the Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock, Texas. It also covers how his family, beginning with his great-grandparents, came to this area.

DATE RANGE: 1982-1996 (plus background material circa 1860-1906).

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

### **TAPE ONE, SIDE A:**

Describes how he went with his friends, the Lineberrys, to an opening of an exhibit at the Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock, Texas, at which the Lineberrys were being honored for their donations. He was so impressed with the facility that he started talking with various people, such as Al Mitchell and Bill Stephens, about having a similar center in New Mexico.

Dr. Stephens took the initiative and visited the center in Lubbock. Dr. Stephens wanted to broaden the concept to include farming, even including early Indian farming. Mr. Jones was on the first board, which went up to Fort Stanton to see what Robert O. Anderson was proposing in regard to having a horse museum there. Jones felt Fort Stanton would be a good site and was thinking in terms of a ranching center like the one at Lubbock, whereas Dr. Stephens wanted the museum to be located on the New Mexico State University campus. Jones felt that some University people were worried that if there was a ranching center in Fort Stanton they would have a much smaller role to play.

There is some discussion as to when these events occurred. Mr. Jones was sure it was not when he was president of the Cattle Growers, which was between 1982 and 1984, but is not sure if it was before or after his tenure in that office. Mrs. Jones felt that everything started to “jell” when Dr. Stephens brought Dr. James Halligan into the discussions.

Mr. Jones spent time describing the facility at Lubbock and the need for New Mexico to start saving artifacts before they all disappear. He also talks once again about how he and Dr. Stephens always had differing ideas on what type of heritage center it should be and where it should be located. Finally, he said, he began to lose enthusiasm for the project. This, plus the fact that he was busy with other things and felt the museum project was healthy, led him to quit attending the meetings. Although he feels Dr. Stephens deserves a great deal of credit for getting the project up and running, he feels that some of the accounts are unfair to him (Jones).

Mr. Jones described how his grandfather Jones came to the area in the 1870s with a herd of cattle. He first settled in Duncan, Arizona, and was a member of the Duncan Guard, the state militia set up to fight the Apaches. After his wife's cousin was killed by Apaches, however, he decided to move back to Texas. The consultant's father was born in a covered wagon at the Black River Village (near Carlsbad). His grandfather worked for the Garst and Nations Cattle Company in the Sacramentos and eventually he built his own herd and ranched in Kenna, New Mexico.

The consultant's maternal great-grandmother was a widow living in Virginia. She sold out and brought her outfit, including the slaves, to Texas before the Texas revolution. Mr. Jones believes that most of the people who settled south of Route 66 (now Interstate 40) were Confederates leaving Texas during Reconstruction, while those north of Route 66 came out of the Midwest.

The consultant describes going to school in Alamogordo, commuting the eighty-five miles home on weekends. His grandfather, his two sons, and a son-in-law lost their holdings in Texas and came up to New Mexico and homesteaded. Mr. Jones states this was because after the First World War the banks called in their loans in order to invest the money in Europe at a higher rate

of interest.

Mr. Jones went to New Mexico State University for a while to study engineering, but he left because all he really wanted to do was "to ride a good horse and get back to the ranch."

He always liked history and wishes he had talked more to some of the old-timers living in his area. His father wasn't interested in history and didn't pass on much information. Although the consultant's grandfather died when he was small, Mr. Jones was able to relate a story about how at night he mistook a yucca plant for an Indian and ended up having to spend three days rounding up his horses that had wandered off while his grandfather was hiding from the "Indian."

He mentions a book written about that period of time by a lady in Texas, but couldn't recall the name of the book.

### **TAPE ONE, SIDE B:**

Mr. and Mrs. Jones were married in 1950 and had two sons, one of whom died from bubonic plague in 1981.

Mr. Jones found the book briefly mentioned at the end of side A, *Frontier Days in the Southwest* by Jennie Parks Ringgold. In it she describes leaving Texas and going through Mesilla to Silver City and in Silver City finding a wagon train the Indians had attacked. She describes some of the needless cruelty to animals and then how they killed, but did not mutilate, a man whose courage they admired.

Mr. Jones was president of the Cattle Growers [Association] and a "non-attending member" of the Hudspeth [Texas] County Historical Society. He was also appointed to the National Advisory Council to the Secretary of Interior and considers James Watt a friend. He also served on the Agriculture Committee for Governor Anaya and on the Game Commission for nine years. He feels that the Cattle Growers were supportive of the Museum.

Talk again centered on the consultant's original concept for a ranching heritage center similar to the one in Lubbock and how, although he describes himself as a "purist," he felt the idea would work for farming too. His main concern was to preserve artifacts before they disappeared. He felt the project was turning into an attempt to make a commercial operation out of the Museum and to use it as an "advertisement for New Mexico State University." He felt that this would be better done somewhere else.

He feels that the University played a limited part in the founding of the Museum for many years and, while nobody's a stronger backer of the agricultural college in the state than he is, he feels the most meaningful things for the livestock industry have come out of it only in the last fifteen to twenty years. He feels the University was a lot more important to farming than to livestock. He half-jokingly claimed that the only thing the University contributed was dwarfism in cattle, "and it took twenty-five years to get rid of them."

Discussion then turned to Dr. John Fowler, head of the Range Improvement Task Force, which gets involved in all the allotment wars with the Forest Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], and the State Land Office. Mr. Jones feels this group's history should be included in the Museum.

He feels Dr. Stephens was pushing the farming end more than the ranching end, but there were no arguments or fights about it. He was aware of the many things Bill Stephens did for the ranching industry and respected him a great deal, but because of their basic disagreement on emphasis, the consultant bowed out and let Dr. Stephens have his way. He felt that if he had stayed they would have had some "pretty hard arguments" because he didn't believe in some of the things Dr. Stephens was trying to do.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jones was busy with other land matters. He was the governor's representative to the BLM and then served on the previously named national council, so he felt he had little free time to get into a big argument on the direction they were going to go with the Museum.

The consultant was not involved when Mrs. Yetta Bidegain offered some land up near Tucumcari for the Museum, but was involved when they were looking at land near Fort Stanton. Most people wanted it located in Las Cruces because it was on the interstate, while Fort Stanton was thought to be too far from the main tourist routes. He felt that many people going to Ruidoso, especially to the Museum of the Horse, would visit a ranching heritage center in Fort Stanton. There was acreage available at the fort and he felt they should have requested a section or half a section from the federal government. He felt that location would enhance the ranching heritage facet of the Museum; they could do things connected to the early-day cavalry and Indians, plus take trips into the wilderness and the White Mountains. He felt a certain element wanted the Museum to be an enhancement of New Mexico State University and that they were more interested in that than reflecting our heritage.

The consultant felt that the decision to go under the Office of Cultural Affairs was a political decision and not one he would have made. His preference would have been benefactors so the Museum would be independent, divorced from both the state and New Mexico State University. They did have, he said, assurances from the Museum of New Mexico that the Museum would be autonomous as far as decision-making.

The consultant was one of several people who signed notes in order to borrow money. It was mainly, he felt, for clerical help and mailing and stated that no one was concerned about being repaid. As for getting people to contribute funds, he has always felt that people will support something they see is going to work and therefore the board should have tried to get something established and then bring people in to check it out. This is the way they handled it in Lubbock. He describes some of the buildings there.

He feels that back in the 1980s there were enough people around making a lot of money who could have helped out. At the time of the interview, however, the cattle market has been very depressed and many ranchers are living off their equity. In addition, he feels that public sentiment is defined by the mass media, which has turned against people with ranching backgrounds. "All of a sudden we were the guys with the black hats." At this same time, he feels, the influence of the livestock industry in the New Mexico legislature was on the wane. Nonetheless, with backing from people like Governor Bruce King, the bill would ultimately be passed.

#### **TAPE TWO, SIDE A:**

In addition to Governor King, G. X. McSherry from Deming and Don Kidd of Western Banks in

Carlsbad were very supportive. The consultant was not surprised the Museum was funded but emphasized that timing was very important. If someone like Governor Anaya were in office or Governor Carruthers, who had a legislature hostile to his programs, it might not have passed.

Discussion moved to the belief that many people are not aware of where their food and fiber comes from. The consultant feels that, although he did not believe in the old subsidies from the federal government there's nothing now in Congress aimed at supporting agriculture. He states that if you go back and study history that many civilizations were destroyed by bureaucracy and red tape. Eventually, he feels, people lost the incentive to produce food and then the country starved and civilization ended. He cites Russia as an example: they spent a lot of money on defense but couldn't feed themselves. They kept people who were producing the food in peonage, and the people quit producing.

The consultant goes on to describe a recent meeting in Alamogordo. They had formed a foundation [to support private property rights] and found a benefactor to finance in the same way that Ted Turner is supporting environmental causes. At the meeting they had the Lieutenant Governor, Congressman Joe Skeen, and some local political people. They expected Senator Pete Domenici, but he didn't come. This, according to Mr. Jones, was because the state police had been contacted by someone who told them there was a "radical and militia leader up there." Actually, "we had probably the most respectable bunch of people in the world." This caused a great deal of anger among the participants. They tried too late to get Senator Jeff Bingaman to come to the meeting.

When asked about his vision for the Museum, he once again stated that he would like to have something like the Lubbock Ranching Heritage Center, but it would be all right to also have farming operations and go as far back in history as possible.

Mr. Jones mentioned several other people who should be contacted for valuable information on the ranching and farming history of New Mexico.

**TAPE TWO, SIDE B:** Blank