



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Peggy Sultemeier

DATE OF BIRTH: November 3, 1928 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: July 31, 2004

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Sultemeier home in Santa Rosa, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Ramona Caplan

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM x OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: September 3, 2008

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: September 11, 2008

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Sheep ranching in various locations in New Mexico.

DATE RANGE: 1928-2004

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Interview begins with biographical information and a discussion of Sultemeier's siblings. She describes growing up on a cattle/sheep ranch, and her daily chores, which included gathering eggs and bringing in the kindling for the fire. She recalls that she would often go with her father to visit the sheep camps. He would take the herders needed supplies, count the sheep, or replenish the herd. The basic food for the sheep camps included dried fruit, salt pork, flour and other items needed to make biscuits, and fresh meat from the ranch. The family raised pigs, which they butchered in the fall. The butchered pork was smoked in her uncle's smoke house as hams and bacon.

Her siblings are described in greater detail. When Sultemeier was six years old, the family home burned down. The family moved into the ranch bunkhouse until the abandoned homestead house was moved to the burned home's location. The family lived in this old homestead house until a brand new home was built. This new home was built of rock because rock does not burn. The family ranch was located eighteen miles north of Roswell. Sultemeier helped her mother around the home, making meals and churning butter. She did not like to churn, and says, "I hated it."

Sheep camps are discussed. Generally it was one man and one dog responsible for a small herd of sheep. The dogs were the herders personally pet, which they had trained themselves. Sheep dog breeds are briefly discussed as being good for working both sheep and cattle.

Sheep produce two separate crops, the lamb and the wool. Ewes generally had one to two lambs per year. She recalls that her father would say, "You have to have some sheep in order to afford the cattle." Five sheep could run in a pasture where only one cow could be grazed. Sultemeier feels that the stories regarding cattlemen being at odds with sheep ranchers for the sheep eating up all the grazing land are not true. She says that sheep graze one type of grass and cattle eat another, thus helping the ecology of the land by eating the brush that the cattle do not touch. She feels that running both cattle and sheep help to balance the ecological system.

She recalls her school years in Roswell and states that it was a half hour bus trip to the school from the ranch. Downtown Roswell is described. She has fond memories of going to town with her parents. While they shopped she would attend the movies, and recalls that she could get popcorn and her movie ticket for twenty-five cents. She recalls that her family made a special trip to town to see *The Grapes of Wrath* at the theater.

She recalls one particular dust storm in which the teachers warned the students to not touch anything on the bus because of the static electricity in the air. Because of the severity of the storm, students were not able to go all the way home but were holed up at the teacher's home until the storm blew over. The discussion of school days continues.

She learned to writing, addition and subtraction, penmanship, reading and phonics, and history in grade two. Southwest history was not taught until the later grades. Her sibling taught her how to read before she even attended school.

The family home did not have electricity or indoor plumbing. Her mother took in winter boarders, and Sultemeier recalls that her mother did their laundry and fed them. The boarders stayed in the bunkhouse and helped with the ranch work.

Buck rakes are explained and discussed.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

She describes the John Deer tractor, haying season, and the neighbors who helped her father bring in the hay. Standard supplies purchased in town would include flour, sugar, and coffee, and she remembers that

they made their own lard. Her dad would buy items that were in season and on sale in bulk, such as cabbage or bananas. He always bought a lot of dried fruit. The family did raise garden vegetables to supplement their food needs, such as tomatoes, melons corn, and beans, but does not recall that they ever raised potatoes. Her mother always canned a lot of tomatoes. Sultemeier dries her own apricots and peaches gleaned from her own trees.

There is a discussion of how her father acquired the land, and school days in Roswell are again discussed. After she had completed the eighth grade, the family moved to the Santa Rosa area. The initial land purchase was small but her father continued adding on until he had approximately 14, 000 acres. It required a lot of fencing.

Sultemeier attended high school in Santa Rosa. She discusses how she met her husband, Richard. She attended Colorado Women's College in Denver, Colorado for two years, and briefly attended the University of New Mexico shortly before she married, but did not complete her UNM degree.

Richard's family is discussed. His grandparents had moved from Midland, Texas to the Corona, N.M. area for health reasons. Sultemeier tells the story of a steer who fell through the sod house roof. The family chose the Corona area because it had tall grass and the lake was full of water.

Sultemeier describes the ranch she and her husband owned. It had eleven natural lakes on it, and the fact that the water would dry up when there wasn't enough rain. The Merino sheep breed is briefly discussed. When the Sultemeiers were ranching, most of the wool was being sold in Roswell. Richard learned Spanish before he learned to speak English. He spent time in the sheep camps with the herders, as he had no siblings. By the time he was in high school he was responsible for taking the sheep by train to Adrian, Texas. The sheep were set to graze on winter wheat fields to fill them out before sale. The wheat fields were rented.

Their early, married life is discussed. Sultemeier miscarried her first pregnancy, and it was the doctor's opinion that it was caused from too much horse riding. As a result, she quit riding horses. Her children attended school in Moriarty after the Stanley school was closed. They all took part in 4-H activities. Their education and careers are discussed.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

The discussion regarding the children's education and careers is continued. The Sultemeier family lived at the ranch in White Lakes for thirty years before selling out in 1974. It was at this time that they moved to Santa Rosa.

Sultemeier recalls the White Lakes area being hit by a grasshopper infestation in 1970 that lasted for five years. The grasshoppers ate the grass from a height of eighteen inches down to the ground. Individual ranchers sprayed as much as they could, but many gave up after failing to control the infestation. The grasshoppers agitated the cows to the point that the cows were not breeding. The Sultemeiers sold out, but kept a foundation herd of young cattle. Sultemeier states that the cattle industry began to change around this time. Prices of gas and groceries increased, and ranchers either had to "get big" or sell out. It is her opinion that the grasshopper "epidemic" eventually ruined Socorro County.

The Burris family is briefly discussed as well as the death of Richard's parents in 1975 and 1976, and her mom's death two years later. In the late 1970s, the Sultemeiers purchased a fifth wheel and traveled around. They kept the house in Santa Rosa and would return home "every so often."

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

Sultemeier discusses her involvement in the Cowbelles organization and explains that their goal is to promote the beef and cattle industry. She is a member of the National Cattle Grower's Woman's Association. She enjoys her work with the Cowbelles because they are teaching school children that the "cattle industry is part of every living part of their lives even if they are not in the industry." She feels that the cattle industry is a very important part of our food chain. She believes that it is important to

watch out for the environmentalists who attack the ranching way of life, and accuse ranchers of tearing down habitats, and causing erosion and pollution.

The ranch at Stanley is discussed. Their home was built by Richard, and had a good well water supply. Several droughts are discussed, as well as the winter effects on the cattle. Herds were moved to the timbered land in the winter. A typical year's work is discussed.

Lamb versus mutton is discussed. Sultemeier states that an old ewe is mutton, and ewes are considered old at age five. The differences in Basque Spanish and local Spanish dialects are discussed.

Today sheep are run in pastures and not in small herds. They do not require herders, and the ranchers hire men to ride the pastures. When sheep were kept in herds, the pregnant ewes were placed in a dropping herd, which meant that they had a certain spot to drop their lambs. Now they lamb out in unprotected pasture. Sultemeier says that she misses lambing season. It was a beautiful sight to see the small herds of ewes with their lambs, often with herds containing lambs at various stages of growth.

She discusses the changes in the sheep/calf markets and the changes that have taken place since there is now competition from other countries such as Australia. Sheep ranchers today breed for leaner cuts of meat for the table. They try to grow longer staple wool, and use sheep coats [blankets] to keep the wool clean. This produces a better quality fleece and keeps the sheep warmer after shearing. She recalls that they once lost one hundred and fifty sheep after shearing because it hailed and the sheep got too cold.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

The Australian and New Zealand sheep infiltration into the United States is discussed. Sultemeier believes that buying domestic lamb offers the consumer certain protections that imported lamb does not offer because the regulations of other countries are not up to the standards in this county. She feels that importers should have the same restrictions that we have in order to protect the domestic market.

Home remedies, veterinarians, and doctors are discussed. It was a common practice to only call the professionals in emergencies. Area celebrations, picnics, dances, rodeos, church activities, and social life are discussed. Sultemeier is happy that her children were raised on a ranch. It has instilled a good work ethic in them.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Soil Conservation are briefly discussed, as well as governmental regulations in regards to the sheep industry.

The Santa Rosa area is now dependent on the tourism industry instead of the ranching industry. The area is known as a scuba diving location, and has a trout growing station. Area natural lakes are fed by artesian wells.

Richard's father's journals and ledgers are discussed.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

The journals and ledgers discussion continues. Photographs of various relatives, and locations around New Mexico, and in particular the Corona area are discussed in detail.