

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Peter Mocho

DATE OF BIRTH: December 26, 1916 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: December 6, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Joint Stockmen's Annual Meeting - Albuquerque, NM.

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: January 7, 1998

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRACTED: August 9, 1999

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: An interview completed with me of the Museum "founders". Also discusses his background briefly – sheep ranching in New Mexico and changes in that industry.

DATE RANGE: 1916 –1998

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Peter Mocho, a charter member of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum Foundation.

His father was a “Basque sheepherder,” who arrived in Raton, New Mexico in the early years of the twentieth century after working for a period of time on a ship in Oregon. The consultant’s father and uncle saved \$ 1300.00 and bought a few sheep and a wagon. They got a herd of sheep on credit from the Charles Ifeld Company. The Mocho brothers kept moving south and eventually owned property near Encino. Mocho’s mother’s family came from East Texas to homestead in New Mexico in 1906. They homesteaded property on the north side of the Capitan Mountains, and that is where Mocho’s parents met (his paternal uncle married his mother’s sisters; the children were “double cousins”). The family bought a ranch in Santa Fe County (1917) and raised cattle and sheep.

Peter Mocho and his brother were educated at St. Micheal’s Academy in Santa Fe. He graduated from high school in 1934. He attended college at New Mexico Agriculture and Mechanic Arts College in Las Cruces from 1935 – 1939. Upon graduation he worked for a short time for the Farm Security Administration and as a “circuit – riding” County Agent in northern New Mexico. He spent the war years (WWII) at the Fernandez Company Ranch in western New Mexico (he was with the ranch a total of ten years). In 1957, he established Oñate Feed Company in Albuquerque, and after 39 years in the business, is in the process of selling the company.

Discusses sheep ranching, his “father’s first love.” The Fernandez Company Ranch was primarily a sheep ranch. Since he left there in 1950, several changes occurred in the sheep raising, including lack of control of coyote predation and problems hiring sheepherders, who now make more on “welfare” than minimum wage. He sees these issues as predominating in the northern and western part of the state; however, in the southeastern portion of the state somewhat different conditions prevail. The ranchers there had “eliminated” the coyote and had fenced pastures where the sheep were allowed to range. To emphasize the changes in the sheep business, Mocho states that his father and a partner shipped 60,000 sheep in the late 1930’s, however, three or four years ago there was not a single sheep on the tax rolls of Santa Fe County.

Begins discussion of the founding of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum. He credits Dr. Gerald Thomas and Dr. Bill Stephens for their enthusiasm and persistence in working to establish the Museum. He also credits the first president of the Foundation, Bill McIlhane of Albuquerque with a great deal of hard work.

Mocho worked on establishing a “grassroots group” to bring other people into the Foundation. Board members were also assigned so many individuals to contact about the project by either Bill McIlhane or Bill Stephens.

States that private fund raising was “impossible” in New Mexico. Rather it is important to “get the enthusiasm of your people to encourage your representative government to see the . . . value in your project”. Mocho states that it was difficult for “particularly our ranch people” to accept that the Museum would need government sponsorship.

A company from Dallas developed a fund raising campaign for the early executive committee. Mocho states that this campaign didn’t work because it entailed more of a time commitment than people were willing to make.

Discusses various sites that were considered for the Museum including Tucumcari, Taos, Fort Stanton, and, of course, sites at New Mexico State University.

Mocho became less active in the Foundation once the legislation was passed to establish the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, and a Museum Board of Directors was appointed. He stated that the Foundation was “kind of quiet there for two or three years.”

He believes that an important mission of the Museum is to acquaint the public with how food is produced, and how that production changed over time. He disputes the statement that two percent of Americans are involved in agriculture, and states that the correct figure are 20 percent when distribution, management, and marketing is taken into consideration.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

States that the ranchers were more “vociferous” in the development of the Museum, seeing “sod farming” as “Johnny-come-lately” to New Mexico agriculture. However, he believes that they eventually came to recognize both farming and ranching were important. He relates that the name for the Museum “evolved”: “we accepted the terminology that was used from time to time.”

Mocho states that as far as the political aspects of founding the Museum, “fortunately in New Mexico leadership in most organizations have access to, to the executive.”

Discusses his personal philosophy that a serious problem in America today is the failure to “acknowledge any responsibility.”