

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Raymond Jarratt

DATE OF BIRTH: December 7, 1920 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: June 20, 2003

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Jarratt residence, Los Lunas, NM

INTERVIEWER: Ramona L. Caplan

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: February 10, 2004

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Ramona L. Caplan

DATE ABSTRACTED: September 2003

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Excellent

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Originally a dairyman in Texas, Raymond Jarratt has been a New Mexico dairyman since 1956 when he moved from Texas to work for Valley Gold Dairy. He has been an independent dairy farm owner since 1958. He presently owns and operates a 350-acre dairy in Los Lunas and sells to Dairy Farmers of America. He discusses his ancestry, farm life when he was a child in Texas, rearing his children on a dairy farm, dairy production and care of milk cows, the superiority of Ayrshire cattle over Holsteins, and droughts. Also talks about the condemnation of his land by the city to secure acreage to expand their sewer plant.

DATE RANGE: 1956 – 2003

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Consultant was born in 1920 in Roscoe, Texas. The Jarratt family came to Virginia in 1607 and he talks about the home there. Discusses an old split in the family between two brothers. One kept the name Jarratt, moved to Georgia and eventually to New Mexico. The other brother changed the name to Jarrett, went to West Virginia, Pennsylvania, then towards Ohio and Illinois. Raymond's great uncle moved across the south "to be a cowboy in the West"; the brothers followed and settled in South Texas and West Texas. Grandfather homesteaded in Roscoe area. Father attended Add-Ran College in Thorps Springs, Texas (which later became Texas Christian University).

Mother's family came to United States from Germany around 1900s. Parents married in 1908 (they were adjoining farmers). Moved to Stephenville in 1916 where Jarratt's father worked milking cows and delivering fresh milk door-to-door. Father was born 1886, brother was born in Roscoe in 1916. Family returned to Roscoe, but moved back to Stephenville in 1921.

Father was active in Methodist church in Stephenville serving as Sunday school superintendent for 20-25 years. Never miss a service. Consultant talks about how his Huguenot ancestors moved around Europe and eventually to the United States. His father was fanatically religious and the consultant recalls that they didn't dance and had no radio or electric lights on the farm. The house had a wood stove in the middle of the dining room and they used kerosene lamps. He remembers that the REA brought electricity into the country area.

Offers comments of President Roosevelt and the Great Depression. "Lots of things weren't too good but the situation at the time called for radical measures." Talks about hobos traveling and looking for work and something to eat. His wife thought hobos marked the sidewalk to identify folks who helped them.

Family never went hungry – had garden, small orchard, berry patch, milk cows, beef cattle, hogs, chickens, turkeys. No electric power for cream separator. Dad went to town once a week usually for flour and other staple foods. Family raised and sold peanuts, a little bit of cotton "boll weevils got it by the time I got big enough to pick cotton". Raymond started helping with chores when he was 3 or 4 years old – fed chickens, filled water troughs for chickens, rounded up calves. Earned no allowance – raised his kids the same way. States that he has raised his kids the same way.

He recalls that he walked 2 ½ miles to school, went every day. There was a school in the center of every 4-5 square mile area, "always within walking distance." His parents impressed on their children the importance of education. All three kids graduated from college.

Dad had 360 acres — about 110 acres in cultivation, the rest in grass for cattle and sheep. Grew peanuts, milo, oats, baled hay and planted Sudan (grass). Let Johnson grass grow and baled and stacked it for cows in winter, also baled peanut vines to feed cows. Sold butter later on when he was in high school. They were "diversified farmers", raising dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, turkeys, and chickens. Turkeys were almost 100% cash crop—his father raised five to six hundred turkeys. They normally ate chickens and beef.

Wife Fenella is a descendant of a brother of Meriweather Lewis, and of George Washington's wife's sister's children. "Someone murdered Meriweather" – it was not suicide, according to her grandmother.

Consultant returned from Army to Texas in 1945. There had been seven years of drought, and Raymond moved to New Mexico to answer a job advertised in *Hoard's Dairyman*. Raymond went into the Army straight out of Texas A&M (B.S., Agronomy). He discusses his achievements playing basketball in high school and at Stephenville Junior College.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Talks about his family and dating his wife. Describes his present home and land. First came to New Mexico in 1956 (age 36) in response to advertisement for a farm manager at Valley Gold Dairy. He describes it as "probably the biggest dairy in New Mexico." R. B. Price Sr., the father of Dudley Price, owned the majority of the stock. Discusses different Valley Gold operations (dairies, farm land, goat and hog operations, milk production, feed rations, and genetics. New Mexico has high quality milk, high average production per cow. Describes dairy operations in Valencia County — "dairy capital of New Mexico."

The first two years he was at Valley Gold. Then leased a dairy farm in 1958, bought milking cows, and ran his own dairy. Bought the land although he was broke because seller sold it with nothing-down and monthly payments. Compares prices paid and expenses over the years.

Talks about buying machinery and land at Los Lunas, relative values and setting a loan. Brought Holsteins from his Albuquerque dairy.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Moved to Las Lunas in 1960 with all his Holsteins. He had Ayrshires on his own dairy in Texas. Worked for government for one year after leaving Army, then went into partnership in 1948 in Stephenville with a doctor for two years. Seven to eight hundred acres of farm land, dairy and beef farming, and chickens were raised. Fenella was the Assistant County School Superintendent. Ended partnership, borrowed money, bought their own place in 1948-49. Describes subsequent problems and situation before moving to New Mexico. Leased his cows for a couple of years to the person who bought his dairy.

Talks about the breeding of Holsteins and how dairy producers are concerned only with production and not reproduction.

His current cows are descendants of his original Holsteins. Explains why he brought in Ayrshires. Keeping quality of milk related to health of the animals, how clean the milk barn is – "strictly management." Other dairy farmers in New Mexico do not use Ayrshires. Talks about changes in milk pricing systems and how pricing is determined.

Consultant discusses differences between cheese plant milk (Class 3 milk) and Class 1 milk to be bottled. The cost depends on intended use. Milk for ice cream costs less than cheese plant milk, according to federal milk marketing order. Talks about which groups controls percentages of milk in the United States and why New Mexico is among the cheapest milk in the US. Better conditions exist in the west for producing milk, humidity is low, overall better climate.

Discusses changes to environmental laws and urban expansion in California, and compares the selling of milk in Dallas versus selling milk in Albuquerque. More milk produced in New Mexico per capita than anywhere else in the United States = local surplus affects price.

The consultant was involved in home milk delivery. Guaranteed contract takes all his milk, regardless of the size of his herd. Believes that feeding and management are the big cause of increased production, not genetics. Doesn't use genetic programs like Dudley Price does.

He talks about his childhood and compares it to how he raised his kids. Karen is first child (born 1945); Ray Junior is second child (born 1950) and Janet is third child (born 1957). Janet lives and works on the farm (bookkeeping) and Karen works on the farm but lives elsewhere in Los Lunas. Wife Fenella worked on the farm here, drove the tractor. In Texas she drove the tractor with the baby in her lap and milked the cows when Raymond was in the hospital.

He explains the irrigation system in the area and the role of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

Consultant continues to talk about water problems and the use of wells. Discusses the labor force and the role his children play in the daily operation of the dairy. Talks about his involvement in industry organizations and cooperatives and offices he has held, including the Ayrshire Breeders Association, the World Federation of Ayrshire Societies, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Valencia County Farm Bureau. Offers more details about the work of the Farm Bureau and the Soil Conservation Service.

Briefly talks about how President Roosevelt's programs had benefited communities and how he has been involved in all dairy organizations starting with the New Mexico Dairy Farmers in 1965. Also discusses changes to the dairy industry and his business since 1965 and compares the number of times a cow should be milked per day.

Discusses the conflict with the city and its condemnation of some of his land in order to gain it for an enlargement of the City Sewer Plant. He discusses the benefits from an out of court settlement, as well as his concerns regarding seepage and contamination.

He talks about the concerns of other groups and their efforts to stop the building of the plant, and sees it all as urban expansion. The lawsuits were settled, but daughter Janet continued to work with the Legislature for an alternative plan that was rejected by the City government.

He discusses his dairy workers. Year-round he employs his two daughters, one feeder, two milkers, and two farmers for his 350 acres of farmland. Some of the land is leased and some he owns. In the summer, he also has a relief man, either a milker, feeder, farmer or whatever is needed. His land was part of a land grant. He raises alfalfa, oats, and Sudan (grass) for hay.

Reminisces about his family and childhood. "I didn't realize we had hardships." Although they had no money, they didn't want or need anything. They were very poor but didn't know it. Always had enough food and clothes. Remembers going barefoot all summer and only wearing shoes for church. Recalls that his "sister's and my feet were so tough that stickers wouldn't stick in our feet."

Still owns the place in Texas, but leases it out. Talks about how dairy farms in the area are failing, either because they are unprofitable or the owners are too old. Recalls that after one particularly dry summer he dug a well and has had water ever since. Uses some to irrigate crops, and draws 2,000 gallons of water a day from the well.