



## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

### INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Fern Duey

DATE OF BIRTH: January 19, 1914 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: May 21, 2008

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Consultant's home in Ft. Sumner, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Diane Williams

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMFRHM \_\_OTHER: Taiban Comm. History Project

TRANSCRIBED: No

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: June 26, 2008

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Rural living in Taiban, N.M.

DATE RANGE: 1914-2008

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

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

Duey's parents came to New Mexico before she was born. Her father came in 1908 and filed a homestead claim two miles northeast of Taiban, N.M., having traveled by train with his brother from Iowa. Her mother was born in Missouri. Her parents married in New Mexico. Duey does not know much about her grandparent's life or why her father selected the Taiban area as a homestead site. Her mother returned to Missouri to be with family when Duey was born and then returned to Taiban. Letters kept them in touch with relatives back in Iowa and Missouri, and Duey recalls going back for a visit when she was twelve years old. She remembers that it took six days to get there, and that they had camped along the way.

Duey's parents ran cattle on the homestead. It was too dry to have a garden, and Duey does not remember what sources of water there were on the homestead. Her father worked the ranch and supplemented his income as a school bus driver. He also worked as a janitor at the school for several years and hauled sand from Tolar Creek.

Duey attended both elementary and high school in Taiban. "Taiban was a pretty good sized town then," she says. She graduated in 1932 and recalls that the high school in Taiban closed in 1942. After that time, students were bused to Ft. Sumner, N.M.

Although education was important to her parents, she did not pursue any higher education because money was short in those days. The family had chickens and dairy cows on the ranch, and the milk was given away to a family in Taiban. It was not sold. Although she does not know why, her father did care for sheep. She recalls that they had goats on the homestead at one time, but does not recall why they were there. Her father did not hire additional help on the ranch.

The family did attend church occasionally, but only when they could afford the gas to go. Different preachers from the college in Portales came to Taiban to preach on a rotational basis. The church building was built by the Presbyterians, but both Methodists and Baptists used it. Her family was Baptist, but attended church whenever they could regardless of which denomination was represented. She does not recall any other churches being in Taiban. Duey's family was not involved in politics, and says that politicians were respected and would often bring fruit for the children "when they were politicking."

As a young woman, social activities consisted of parties, school plays, and rodeos. There was a movie theater in Ft. Sumner, and she attended once in a while. Local farmers and the whole community participated in picnics held on special holidays, and Duey recalls attending community events where there were a lot of mosquitoes. Birthdays were celebrated, although she does not recall if they ate cake or not. High school athletics were important to the community as a whole, and Duey played on a basketball team. Occasionally there were visits to the neighbors, and she recalls walking the mile to the nearest neighbor for night-time visits. The family did have a radio, but not until the 1920s when Duey was nearly grown.

Duey met her future husband in Missouri when she went back to help her aunt's new baby. She stayed in Missouri for a year, married her husband in 1936, and returned to Taiban in 1937. He husband had done odd jobs for people when he lived in Missouri.

When Duey was a child, the town of Taiban had several grocery stores, a bank, and a motel. After 1937 the town began to decline once the high school closed down. Businesses closed, and residents moved away. Her parents stayed in the Taiban area.

In 1937 Duey and her husband moved to Ft. Sumner. Her husband got a job working at a filling station, and a year later he went to work for a mechanic. He served three years in the Navy during World War II. Duey had been driving a mail route for the post office before the war started, but during the war she worked in the post office building while her husband was away. After her husband returned from the war, he continued working as a mechanic and worked at the Chevrolet, Ford, and Dodge dealerships in the years that followed. Duey returned to driving her mail route, and says that her job with the post office was a "star route," which meant that she would not get a pension when she returned. [ ]A star route was a contract for mail delivery along a designated route. Such contractors were not postal employees, hence why Duey was not eligible for a pension. Today this is known as a Highway Contract Route – HCR.

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

Duey worked as a secretary in the Baptist church before taking a position in the school library in Ft. Sumner, which she held for eleven years. Her husband was a mechanic until he retired.

Her parents stayed at the ranch in Taiban and moved into Ft. Sumner when they got older. Duey's husband and her brother ran cattle on the ranch and still own it, although it is now leased out to another rancher. She recalls that it was difficult to earn a living in Ft. Sumner during the war and in the years immediately following the war, and states that it has always been difficult in that area. The Great Depression years hurt everyone financially, but she does not recall if additional jobs were needed to supplement income in order to keep the ranch. The only time that she recalls having to get credit was to buy a car.

It was harder to make a living out on a ranch than it was for people who operated businesses in town, but Duey says that life was "all okay." She did not know anything other than rural living and feels that the rural lifestyle does not have a future. "Things have changed. Everything that I can think of has changed," she says.

There is a brief discussion about church and other activities. The church was always painted white, and the bells could be heard out at the ranch. It was used for other activities such as meetings or other community events. She recalls the Christmas tree at the church and that there were "dolls on the tree, just hanging, just the doll itself, not the box."