



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Minerva Cheatum

DATE OF BIRTH: Circa 1938 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: August 25, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Cheatum home, Clint, Texas

INTERVIEWER: Robert Hart

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM__x__ OTHER:_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: January 18, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Robert Hart

DATE ABSTRACTED: February 19, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Memories as a child on grandparents' farm. Both Italian and German prisoners of war were employed there during World War II, as many as fifty at a time. Consultant's grandfather had a cookout for the Italian POWs, which was attended by Italian-American families living in the area. Includes thorough description concerns grandfather's use of draft horses in farming.

DATE RANGE: 1943 - 1946

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

German and Italian World War II prisoners of war were housed in camps in Ysleta and Fabens, respectively. The prisoners were trucked to the farm of Minerva Cheatum's grandfather, Rafael Guardado, and brought sack lunches with them. The farm was between San Elizario and Fabens.

She had direct contact with the POWs and said she had no fear of them. She was more cautious, though, with German POWs. The Germans were serious; the Italians, happier. The prisoners and other farm workers, including family members, shared their lunches.

People of Italian descent who lived in the El Paso area would come to the farm and visit the Italian POWs, taking their photographs. The guards were more alert when the German POWs were working there.

About fifty prisoners at a time would harvest cotton or hay.

The consultant remembers the Italian POWs teaching the Hispanic farm workers to sing in the fields, and trading their packed lunches for burritos. She said her grandfather was permitted to have a steak cookout for the POWs lunchtime on the farm's picnic area.

Because of the attitude of her grandparents, Mrs. Cheatum said she did not see the Germans and Italians as "prisoners" but as "somebody else coming from another place and working." They chopped cotton and turned hay as well as helped with the harvests.

Mrs. Cheatum related a detailed description of her grandfather's use of draft horses he bought from Fort Bliss. The horses' temperament, care and work patterns are described.