



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Bonnie Armstrong

DATE OF BIRTH: October 13, 1936 SEX: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: December 12, 2002

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Quemado Senior Center, Quemado, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Carol Pittman

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: November 3, 2005

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Bob Cogswell

DATE ABSTRACTED: May 25, 2005

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Rural farm life in the Quemado, N. M. area

DATE RANGE: 1936-1950

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

The consultant begins with a discussion of her early school years in the Quemado area. She remembers that the school bus could not always complete the trip to the school in Quemado, twenty miles away. She remembers that her mother home schooled them for the first two years.

Electricity became available in the early '50s, and phone service came a few years later. Water was supplied by wells powered by windmills. She recalls that her father developed a system to pump water from a well up the hill into a storage tank. The water was brought into the house using a gravity-flow system. They had only cold water until her father built a furnace in the washroom to heat water for washing clothes. The shower room in the house had a five-gallon container on the roof. Before you could shower, water needed to be heated in the furnace and then carried up to the container on the roof. Once that water was gone, your shower was over.

Her father was a farmer at heart and used a team of horses to do the farm work. He would contract out with other farms in the area. She discusses the two horses, Brownie and Chica, and that her father frequently wanted to kill Chica, the rebel. Later he acquired an old Farmall tractor. He also worked for the Triple A [AAA-Agricultural Adjustment Administration], the forerunner of the SCS [Soil Conservation Service]. 1.

Her parents were dry-land farmers, growing mostly corn and beans. The corn was mostly used for livestock feed. They would strip the corn off the cobs, run it through a sheller, and stockpile the seed in the barn. Some corn was milled into cornmeal by a neighbor. Cornmeal was used for the evening meal, a kind of mush. Dried fruit, ordered from a catalog, supplemented their diet.

Yardage flannel was ordered from the catalog and used to make nightclothes. Hand-me-downs were altered, cut, and re-sewn to make dresses for the girls. Her mother used a foot-treadle sewing machine. A motor was eventually added to the sewing machine. The family would go to Magdalena in the fall and order whatever they needed. They would buy a year's supply of flour, lard, and sugar. The purchase of a Model A improved the trip.

The consultant recalls that her parents were strict about being debt free. Everything they needed was paid for at the time of purchase. Once, she remembers, her parents had paperwork drawn up for a loan to buy the adjacent property to theirs. However, when it came time to buy they had the money and paid cash for it without ever taking the loan. This made the family very self-sufficient. Much of what they enjoyed they made themselves. Cottage cheese came from a supply of clabbered milk sitting on the back of the stove. The noon meal was often pinto beans and cottage cheese. They even had enough that it was used to feed the chickens, especially the baby chicks. Her mother also made her own butter. Shepherders would trade mutton or jerky for sugar, milk, butter, and eggs. Her mother eventually got an old canning outfit and began to can her own meat. The children would help with that work.

Cooperation between neighbors was a necessity during branding days or when someone was sick. Mrs. Davis, a nurse who lived about three miles away, would come and assist when anyone asked. The doctor lived in town and also helped a lot. She recalls that her brother Chet was seriously ill with an infected liver and she had a nasty cold.

*Footnote: 1. He would survey dams and dam sites for them despite having only an eighth or ninth grade education. The dams were built for livestock watering tanks.

Her father drove to Magdalena to borrow a car that would get them through the foot and a half of snow that was on the ground. Her parents loaded her and her brother in the car and took them to the hospital in Albuquerque.

She recalls that their house was small and that her father built a small bunkhouse for her brother. He also built her a room on the front porch. She recalls that these two rooms were very cold.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

When the consultant was born, her grandfather insisted that her mother go to Albuquerque to have the baby because his wife had died from a tubular pregnancy. The doctor delivered Bonnie in a rented motel room. Chet was born in Eagar where a midwife had set up a practice. Bonnie had her children at her grandfather's home. She tells the story of delivering one of her sons on her anniversary. She discusses the births and illnesses of her children.

Home remedies were often used for less serious illnesses. Sautéed onion packs were placed on chests for chest colds, and hot toddies made with honey, lemon juice, and whiskey were used as an expectorant.

****EDITOR'S NOTE:** The consultant is mistaken about the Agricultural Adjustment Administration being related to the Soil Conservation Service. They were separate federal agencies with different, distinct purposes.