

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Placida Padilla and Leborio Castillo

DATE OF BIRTH: Placida 1933; Leborio, 1926. GENDER:Female/Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 3, 2001

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Quemado Senior Center

INTERVIEWER: Carol Pittman

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM__x__OTHER____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: January 11, 2002

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Sylvia Wheeler

DATE ABSTRATED: April 26, 2002

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Siblings speak of childhood years on a small subsistence ranch in western New Mexico. Impact of the influx of homesteaders on the existing culture. Traditions associated with courtship.

DATE RANGE: Late 1920s through early 1940s

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Leborio states that Placida was born in 1933, there was three feet of snow on the ground. The family lived on a little ranch in San Ignacio (the ranch had been established by their mother's father). Describe their father going to get a midwife to assist with the delivery. Leborio was seven years old at the time of Placida's birth.

Leborio remembers going to Mangas to school. Their mother moved the children from the ranch to Mangas every fall for school; their father stayed at the ranch. They didn't own a home in Mangas but "Mrs. Baca . . . used to loan us a house here or there."

The one-room school in Mangas was held in a house. The students sat on long, homemade benches. They do not recall having tables to write on, maybe the teacher had a table. Placida relates, "Sometimes maybe there'd be one or two in first grade or one or two in second grade." Leborio says there may have been fifteen students attending school there.

Placida remembers playing with river rocks which she and her two sisters pretended were cows with their calves.

Placida believes her education was good, when she was transferred to Quemado, "I made two grades in one year." They discussed their teacher Mrs. Lujan who was strict, "You better behave, otherwise she'd come with a stick!" "And then you'd get it a second time at home." Their last teacher at Mangas before the school was closed was Mr. Giron.

English was language used at school though Spanish was spoken at home. Once they started school in Quemado, "the teachers were mean to us because . . . we were used to speaking Spanish." They rode the Pie Town school bus to Quemado. Leborio states that at the time there was "quite a bit of prejudice," they were seated in the back where it was cold and the European American children rode up front. The children were cold by the time the bus arrived as they had already walked about two miles to the bus stop.

Leborio says that prejudice "gradually" became less, while Placida states, "It kind of went under the table a little bit. Let's put it that way." Placida indicated that her children found difficult to believe the level of prejudice that Placida's generation had experienced in school. Her children had good friends who were European American. Placida feels that there was less prejudice in Quemado than in Pie Town, composed of homesteader families from Texas and Oklahoma: "they were raised that way."

They speak of their family life, of the foods they ate as children, being home canned vegetables and meat. Most of their clothing was purchased not home sewn. However, their father, when young, used to trade salt (taken from Salt Lake) with Puebloan peoples for chile and beans. It was a two-day journey by wagon to Acoma to trade. Magdalena was their shopping center, where staples would be purchased about every six months. Magdalena was also where they drove their cows to be shipped. Most ranchers in the area in the late 1920s and into the 1930s had twenty, thirty, or at the most sixty head of cattle on open range. Fences were built after the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act. Then ranchers needed a permit to run cattle on public land. Their grandfather raised sheep at Salvadore Springs for a period of several years, however, he lost this land to the Forest Service. (The family migrated to the area from the Belen/Aragon area.)

Speaking of youthful chores, Leborio says that they had milk cows that he had to round up each morning. They would pen up the calf at night and then the cow would be ready to give milk in the morning. His mother made her own butter; she had a hand separator. They also raised chickens and a pig that would be butchered around Christmas. Their mother kept a garden ditch-irrigated from the San Ignacio spring.

Describes one neighbor who became angry that their father's cows were going through his fences. Instead of talking to their father about it he "mistreated" their father's cows. At one time the Mangas and Quemado areas were populated with Hispanic people until many homesteaders came into the area.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Placida states, "I'd say the majority [of homesteaders] were prejudiced." The homesteaders referred to the people living in the area as "dirty Mexicans." This seemed ironic to Placida as the ones calling the names were, in her opinion, "just filthy dirty."

They have traced their family back four generations. Both Placida and Leborio left the ranch and married young.

Placido speaks of her mother doing laundry on a scrub board; and boiling the clothes to get them clean. She would make a lye soap. Laundry was done once a week; water had to be heated outside in a "big old black" kettle over a wood fire. Clothes were dried on the line. Her mother used the soapy water left after doing laundry to scrub the wood floors on her hands and knees.

The floor of one room of the house was re-plastered every year. And they had to redo the outside of the adobe house every two to three years with mud and straw. Inside the house they whitewashed the walls. Their mother sprinkled the dirt floors [with water] to keep the dust down. One room had an oilcloth like covering for the walls that could be washed.

Their father lost his mother and a brother to influenza. Their father then married his brother's widow, "his father insisted that he marry her." Placida and Leborio could marry whoever they chose though the man's father had to write a letter to the parents of the girl; his parents would take the letter to her parents who would then reply in writing a week or so later, yes or no. If they didn't want their daughter to marry they called it a *calabaza* because they paid the family a pumpkin, rather than saying no directly. When Leborio went to take his letter in to his future wife, his parents and he sat in the front of the pickup while Placida, her grandmother, and her sisters sat in the bed of the pickup and got rained on the way to their residence in Datil.

Placido married a boy she went to school with. His aunt and uncle presented the letter on behalf of her husband-to-be, as his father was ill. Her father did not want her to marry as she was his only child to finish high school and he wanted her to continue her education; however, her mother said that since she was of age "she's gonna run off anyway."