

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: James R. "Jim" Sais

DATE OF BIRTH: April 13, 1937 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 3, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Consultant's home in Albuquerque, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Marcie Palmer

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER: _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: May 26, 2000

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Marcie Palmer

DATE ABSTRACTED: June 12, 2000

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Mr. Sais' life, born 1937. Degree in Agriculture and Extension Education; worked for Extension Service 1959-1992.

DATE RANGE: 1937 to 2000

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE:

Jim Sais was born in Los Lentos, near Los Lunas, New Mexico on April 13, 1937. His parents, Silverio Sais and Ernestine Sichler Sais, both came from farming families and carried on that tradition, living their entire lives in Los Lentos. The consultant grew up there and went to school in Los Lunas. Jim Sais was in the 4-H program from the age of ten. He had his own garden and raised hogs and also helped with the other work done on his father's farm. He learned to drive a tractor when he was five years old.

After graduating from high school in Los Lunas, Sais attended New Mexico State University (then New Mexico A & M) from 1954-1958 from which he received a bachelor's degree in horticulture. He got his master's degree in agriculture and extension education from the University of Maryland on a 4-H fellowship which enabled him to spend 1967-1968 studying first-hand the workings of the United States Department of Agriculture and assisting the staff in New Mexico Senator Joseph Montoya's office.

While still in undergraduate school, Sais spent his summers working for the Burpee Seed Company in California. His first job as a college graduate was with the New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service.

TAPE TWO:

He was hired as the Extension agent at the Jicarilla Apache Reservation where he worked from 1959 through 1960. He left when he was drafted into the United States Army. Upon leaving the army, Sais was rehired by the Extension Service to be the 4-H agent in Rio Arriba County, based in Española. He served in this position from 1962 to 1971. During this period, he came to know the artist, Georgia O'Keefe, who first called him out to her home in Abiquiu to prune her grapes.

The consultant's next assignment brought him to Albuquerque where he was the 4-H agent for Bernalillo County. In 1973, he became the county agent there. From 1980 through 1987, Sais was Horticulturist Specialist for the state of New Mexico. He completed his career with the Extension Service as Extension Department Head for the Northern District, a post involving the oversight of thirteen counties. He held this position from 1987 to 1992.

In retirement, Sais remains active as a trainer in the Master Gardener program in Valencia, Bernalillo, Sandoval and Santa Fe Counties. He has also spent the last five years working with the Appropriate Rural Technology Association, a Christian volunteer organization that has sent him to assist the Tarahumara Indians of Chihuahua, Mexico in improving their agriculture. He is also a private consultant and trainer.

Sais discusses what he considers to have been some of his greatest accomplishments. He enlarged and broadened youth participation in 4-H activities. He encouraged girls and women to explore a larger range of options through education and is proud of the role he played in furthering the career of the woman who became the first female county agent in the United States. He supported the modernization of rural communities by encouraging participation on rural land use committees. He initiated the first farmers market in the state of New Mexico and brought the

flourishing Master Gardener program into the state. He developed agricultural programs to aid the economy of Nicaragua while serving as a USDA Extension Educational Consultant to that country. With the assistance of Allie Sue Gottwald, he wrote a successful grant application for the Extension Service to study sustainable agriculture in New Mexico. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation awarded this project \$1.8 million, with Sais as coordinator, to establish an experiment station at Alcalde. Sais also wrote grants, which put Extension agents back on the Navajo and Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservations. He has made videos, which are available through New Mexico State University.

The consultant is married to the former Susan Gail Woodward, a nurse, and has three grown children: Kimberly Ann, Todd James, and John Bryant, all of whom have attended New Mexico State University.