



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Dorothy Smith

DATE OF BIRTH: January 23, 1914 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: May 25, 2003

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Smith Residence in Corrales, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Ramona L. Caplan

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: June 26, 2003

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Ramona L. Caplan

DATE ABSTRACTED: October 2003

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Excellent

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Dorothy Smith, age 89, is owner/operator of a small, 30-acre farm/ranch operation in the growing urban area of Corrales, in the northern suburbs of Albuquerque. She operates, by herself, a small cattle operation, selling the calves annually, and growing alfalfa for winter cattle feed. It is large enough to maintain the agricultural land designation for tax purposes. In addition to the family ranch, she worked at KOB-TV in Albuquerque and was longtime Secretary-Treasurer for the New Mexico Advertising Federation.

DATE RANGE: 1938-2003

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Dorothy and her husband Wallace ["Smitty"] bought the 30-acre family ranch in Corrales, New Mexico, in 1952. Proud of conservation award she received in 1992.

Recalls birth in 1914 and childhood in a small south-central Illinois town. Remembers hardships felt by family during World War One.

Moved to New York for college. She met husband (a native of Manhattan) there. Married in 1938. Describes circumstances of wartime work in an industrial plant during World War II.

Remembers decision in 1947 to sell everything and drive across the country. Discusses where all they went. Briefly settled in Tucson before moving to Albuquerque. Recounts their first several months in town and their new jobs. Discusses KOB radio station, where Dorothy got a job, and her association with Jerry Danziger [currently the station's Executive Vice-President]. Mentions Smitty's job at Sandia Labs. Explains the nickname and his dislike of given name Wallace.

Describes how they came to purchase their ranch in 1952 and the property's previous history as a farm and then turkey ranch. Explains why they raised cattle to avoid the residential tax base designation. Conversation transitions to discussion of modern agricultural production and the difference in agricultural and residential tax base in community. Explains location of farm crossing the Bernalillo-Sandoval county line.

Talks about maintaining the ranch. Does a lot of it herself, can get help from niece and nephew next door. Explains how she learned to maintain a fence.

Discusses situation since Smitty died and how much effort is taken to keep up the place. Hires someone every September to work on the alfalfa field. Talks about how she irrigates and her lack of knowledge of ditch rights and rules.

Describes how she regularly consulted soil conservancy staff about her alfalfa fields every three or four years. Got advice on changes to make and learned what she was doing right or wrong. By 1992 learned "all I needed to know" and received a plaque for "Outstanding Conservation Farmer for Outstanding Accomplishments in the Conservation of Soil, Water and Related Resources" from the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District. Also received an "Award of Merit for Outstanding Accomplishments in Resource Conservation."

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Resumes discussion of soil science and the relation of clover and grass to the soil. Tells about woman neighbor who recently has started feeding out calves on her pasture, compares with her cattle raising practice. Describes breeds of her cattle: mostly Angus, bull is Angus Charolais. Briefly explains Angus Road, not related to the raising of cattle.

Describes her work at television station KOB, where she began working in 1952. Explains her job as Traffic Manager, role it played in getting commercials from the buyer to the air. Discusses more about Jerry Danziger and work at the TV station and participation in the New Mexico Advertising Federation.

Briefly talks about routes traveled to work, difficulties when the water level of the Rio Grande got high.

More discussion follows about raising alfalfa, correct practices and problems.

Laments at not being able to “call in sick” as a cattle raiser. She talks about the niece next door who helps her, her work as a teacher in Santa Fe, and how often she is at home. Discusses currently investigating if she can still qualify as a farm without raising cattle.

Reviews her life today, work on her biography. Recalls again about how she grew up in a farm family. She discusses changes from horse-drawn wagons to cars.

A discussion about lack of sickness in her cattle all this time, and the veterinarian’s annual visit for branding and shots.

Briefly recalls visit to the N.M. Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum a couple of years before. Makes observations about the importance and interest (or lack thereof) in farming to young people today. Wants to keep up the farm for the family heritage. [Wallace and Dorothy had no children.]