

## **WORKING THE LAND**

(Interviews with people who labored on, or managed farms and ranches such as field workers, sheepherders, or ranch managers)

Interview Protocol: Topics To Be Covered By Interviewer

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: (*Obtain off tape to secure privacy*)

1. Name
2. Address
3. Telephone/fax number
4. Date and Place of birth

### PART 1: FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD HISTORY

1. Parent's names and dates of birth. Names of siblings and order of birth.
2. When did you or your family come to New Mexico? Why did you/they choose to come to New Mexico? Please describe their actual move (wagon, train, automobile).  
What were conditions like when they first arrived?
3. What was your family's occupation? Did both your parents work? If your parents farmed or ranched how did they obtain the land (homestead, rental, purchase)?
4. Where did you live while you were growing up? If you moved frequently, why was this the case? If you were raised on a farm or a ranch what was the nearest town? How often did you get to town and how did you get there? Do you remember the names of any of the merchants in town? Did your parents prefer to trade with some merchants but not others? What was housing like during those years, for example,

how were the houses heated, was there running water, indoor plumbing, what was the frame and roof construction? Do you remember when you got electricity?

5. Did anyone besides your parents and brothers and sisters live with your family (grandparents, boarders, hired men or “girls”)? Were special arrangements made for their room and board?

6. At what age were children expected to start doing chores in the family? What chores did your parents think that very young children could do? Did you learn to cook, bake bread, wash clothes, and sew at home?

7. At what age did you start school? Where did you attend school? How long was the school year? Were you able to attend school for the whole year or was it necessary for you to stay home and help with work at certain times during the year? When did you leave school? Did you want to attend school longer, if so, why were you unable to do so? How did your parents feel about education, did they consider it to be important or were other things more important?

8. Did your parents keep milk cows, chickens, sheep, goats, cattle or raise a vegetable garden or have fruit orchards to provide food for the family or to supplement the family income? Did they preserve fruits, vegetables, or meat, or make medicines, beer, or wine? If so, please describe. Please describe a typical breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Did meals vary according to the season, for example, more fruits and vegetables being available during summer and fall? Did you have special holiday meals? Was clothing made at home or store bought? Did you feel that your parents had to struggle to make ends meet? Were they as well off or better than their neighbors? Do you recall if your parents ever had to arrange for credit and

how they got credit (bank, prominent community member, or family)? What was the family's attitude toward borrowing money?

9. Describe any serious illnesses or accidents that occurred while you lived at home.

How close was the nearest doctor? Was your family able to obtain medical care?

How did your family pay for medical care?

10. If you lived in the country, who were your nearest neighbors? Was work generally swapped out with them, or were the children sent to help the neighbors on certain occasions? Did your family socialize frequently with neighbors, friends, or family? If so, describe a typical get together. Describe occasions when the community came together to celebrate (4<sup>th</sup> of July, a wedding, or fiesta)?

11. How did you get news of the outside world, for example did your family subscribe to newspapers or magazines? Where was the closest post office or how often did you get mail delivered on a rural route? Did a rural bookmobile serve the community? Did you get a radio before you left home? When did you get TV?

12. What is your fondest memory growing up? What was the most difficult part of your growing up years?

## PART II: THE WORKING LIFE

1. At what age did you begin working for a salary or room and board? Did you want to go to work at the time, or did circumstances dictate that you had to take a job?

How did you get the job? What was your first job (what did you do, what hours did you work per day, and did you work Saturday and Sunday), please describe? Who was your employer? If you received a salary, do you recall how much you were

paid? Were there other workers or were you the only employee? On this job or any others that you had later, were new workers hazed or were they the butt of practical jokes, please describe?

2. Please describe subsequent jobs. Describe a typical day in your life from your early working days. Did your responsibilities change over time, and how? What was the best job you had, and why was it your best? Who were some of the memorable people you worked with over the years, and what was special about them (skilled with roping or riding, good with cattle or other animals)? What were relationships like among employees, between employees and the owners or managers? If there were problems, how did they usually get settled? Do you remember any particularly bad fights related to disagreements on the job?

3. If people were laid off a job, why did this usually happen? How were lay offs handled (did the manager or owner tell you ahead of time, were you given any severance pay or recommendations)? How did you generally hear about a job being available? Were some people taken on a trial basis? Were there some places that others told you not to work at, and why?

4. Please describe the type of gear (saddle, tack, bedroll) that you were expected to provide on the job. What would you usually carry in your saddlebags? Did you provide your own horses? Please describe gathering horses in the morning before the day's work began. Who was usually responsible for gathering them?

5. What kind of diseases did you see in cattle, goats, or sheep? What kinds of veterinary work (pulling calves and such) were you expected to do? How often and

for what problems were vets called out to handle? Were there any memorable die-offs?

6. Explain how weather affected your work (lay offs during winter, for example). Please describe any bad droughts or winter weather you remember, and what the results were.

7. What kind of housing was provided, please describe the living arrangements? Describe meals, and who usually prepared the meals? How did meals vary if you were out on round up (from chuck wagon) for example?

8. Describe any bad accidents or injuries you have seen. Were you able to get to a doctor or dentist if you needed to see someone?

9. Did you have any horses or dogs that you felt were special, and if so, what made them so?

10. What would you do for entertainment? Describe dances, ranch rodeos, fiestas, etc. How would you meet people you were interested in dating? Did family, or other people in the community supervise dating carefully? If you married, what was the name of your spouse and children?

11. What were important values (independence, self-sufficiency) or creeds that were shared by you and your co-workers?

### PART III: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. What are your fondest memories of your work? What are the most difficult?

2. Did anything ever happen to make your work easier, for example, changes in technology? Did anything make your life more difficult, for example, changes in laws or regulations?
3. If you had a choice to make over, would you choose the same occupation, why or why not?
4. If you have children, have you encouraged them to seek another type of work, why or why not?

FOLLOW-UP:

1. Do you have any documents or photographs that you would be willing to have copied and added to your interview file?