

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Bruce and Alice King

DATE OF BIRTH: Bruce: April 6, 1924 GENDER: Male/Female
Alice: May 13, 1930

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: August 3 and September 9, 2004

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: August 3 – Museum Library
September 9 – Family home near Stanley, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Cameron L. Saffell

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: August 23, 2006

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: Cameron L. Saffell

DATE ABSTRACTED: July 3, 2007

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Very good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Begins with remarks about King Building at Museum, role in creating the institution. Shifts to history of the King and Martin families and their ranching and farming operations.

DATE RANGE: 1900s – 1990s

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A: [AUGUST 3, 2004]

Bruce King lists most of family who attended building ceremony. Proud of family heritage in the Estancia Valley. Briefly outlines his political history. Nothing more appropriate to them than to name the Museum for them.

Bruce recounts early efforts to create the Museum. Tells story about working with Gerald Thomas, Bill Stephens, and people in the Legislature. Alice mentions need to work with Appropriations Committee and Bill Stephens always saying “we need a little bit more.”

Bruce mentions Permanent School Fund. Talks about Alice hosting breakfasts at the Governor’s Mansion to discuss the project funding. Discusses placement of museum under New Mexico State University versus the State Office of Cultural Affairs. Talks about Bill Stalls and his involvement. Alice says as museum grew it would get better support from the State. More difficult to maintain funding through the University. Lots of university people were involved in the project anyway, so it did not make much difference. Mentions groundbreaking ceremony. Briefly talks about other original board members. Talks at some length about Tom Bollack Sr., and mentions Bill Porter anecdote. Not too difficult convincing people to help fund the Museum.

Feels Museum has done good job saving machinery. Emphasis now needs to be on educating the public about the importance and role of agriculture. Notes how much agriculture, costs, and machinery have changed over the years.

Begins reviewing family histories. Alice talks about how the Martins came to the Moriarity area as homesteaders and dryland farmers. Bruce talks about how his parents came from Texas to the Stanley/Estancia Valley area in 1917. Traded Model T for an unproven homestead. Talks about hard, dry years in the 1920s. Bought up neighboring properties as others moved out; mix of dryland farms and rangeland. Started installing irrigation wells after getting married in 1947. Continued to purchase more lands, breaking out more for bean farming.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Talks about selling milk in Santa Fe, some shipped by rail to Colorado. Remembers Kings getting their first tractor. Talks about New Deal programs, soil conservation programs, and the Soil Bank. Relates how President Eisenhower visited New Mexico to see how bad the drought was.

In wrapping up, Alice talks about how she hopes their kids and grandkids can stay in agriculture as a living. If agriculture and transportation changes as much for them as it did during their [Bruce and Alice’s] lives, who knows what it will be like. Bruce relates concerns about how they had good living with 200 cows and a little bit of crops, but today you cannot hardly make a living with the same numbers of animals, so corporations are taking over more.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A: [SEPTEMBER 9, 2004]

Begins with discussion of homesteading and family members. Alice tells her family history, recalls life as a child, and growing up in the community. She recalls that they didn’t think that they were poor because everyone lived the same way. Alice recalls working with thrashing machines and how her grandparents would go from farm to farm, helping others bring in their crops. She says that church activities were important in the community, and shares how she met Bruce.

Bruce talks about his life as a child and what a typical day was like. Irrigation wells, pinto beans, the switch to corn silage, and feed lots are discussed. Bruce describes the “singing convention”, a common event in rural areas that offered the youth the opportunity to socialize and meet future mates. He states, “It was a long way to court in those days, when we didn’t have very good ways of getting around.” Singing was very popular in those days, and Bruce comments that the Estancia area had “quite a lot of talent.” Folks often played musical instruments and Bruce recalls that music was a big part of his family life. When asked about his childhood, Bruce says, “it was very exciting.” A typical day on the farm is explained, and a detailed account of the milking business is given. Chores, and life on the farm are discussed. He recalls that his father had a lot of help at harvest time, and that San [Santo] Domingo Indians worked for him as well as families from Oklahoma who traveled and worked on their way to California.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

Bruce talks about how he became involved with the Farm Bureau and how he got his start in politics. There is a brief discussion about the philosophical differences between the Farmer’s Union and the Farm Bureau. Irrigation wells, how they were powered, and the costs involved, as well as the crops that were planted are discussed. There is a discussion regarding how the family got started in the propane business.

The decision to do dryland farming is also discussed. Don King joins the conversation. Over the years the King family has purchased neighboring farms, and continued to expand their holdings. These lands were used for farming and ranching. Alice recalls that Bruce’s father would purchase land any time he had extra money, and this practice was passed on to the boys.

Bruce and Alice’s early years as a married couple are discussed. Alice recalls that their first home was made up of two homestead shacks joined together by a hallway. One shack contained the bedroom and living room, while the other shack was the kitchen. She recalls that she didn’t have a vehicle to drive, and that she was alone much of the time while Bruce worked twelve-hour days. Her parents expressed concern that she was alone so much of the time.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

Bruce recalls his start as a cowboy and the breeds of cattle that they had. They had mostly Herefords, but added some Angus and Charolais as their business grew. Cattle from the feedlots were sold to meat processing plants such as Swift and Armour. The family owned feedlot business is discussed in length. There is a brief discussion of the family brand – the Cross-K [+K] that was brought from Texas by their father. Alice describes her family brand.

There is a discussion about brand inspectors and the role that they played in the community. Veterinarians, windmills and fences are also discussed. Vaccinations, and cattle diseases are discussed. While the family did use veterinarians, they also worked on the cattle on their own. Bruce recalls that he learned a lot from the veterinarians. Installation of the windmills is discussed, as well as the construction of fencing and the materials used. Good corner construction is critical to the life span and strength of the fence.

A humorous but potentially dangerous story is told about the installation of a gas hot water tank, and the interview closes with a brief discussion of electricity and propane.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B: Blank