NEW MEXICO FARM & RANCH HERITAGE MUSEUM

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Ferdinand Barg

DATE OF BIRTH: August, 23, 1920 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: 2001

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Nienburg, Germany

INTERVIEWER: Jens Grüber

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM _x__OTHER_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: August 27, 2002

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABSTRACTOR: Rita Hartley

DATE ABSTRACTED: August 21, 2002

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Extremely faint in places, sometimes inaudible.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Barg was taken prisoner in North Africa in 1943, was imprisoned in the United States until 1946. He spent time in Camps Roswell and Artesia.

DATE RANGE: 1943 - 1946

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Barg describes capture in Tunisia, Africa, in May of 1943. The British captured him and he was then turned over to the French. One year was spent in Algeria before he received word that he was to be transferred to the United States. Barg arrived in Norfolk, VA, and was then transported by train to Roswell, NM, in July of 1944.

Barg found the climate very much like Africa and says, "We were used to the climate, same as in Africa. It didn't bother us." He reports, there were no difficulties in camp. He had little contact with camp management but says some pressure was exerted by fellow prisoners not to do any work. He states, that as early as 1942 he realized that Germany would lose the war.

The food rations were "ample" until the end of the war. For a short period of time rations were reduced.

The consultant discusses activities by the Red Cross but he neither sent nor received much mail. Barg was paid for his work and says prisoners could either spend or save their earnings. Upon release in Germany any saved amounts were paid out in the new German currency.
In winter, Barg says, they mostly played cards and watched movies. At the end of the war they were shown movies of the concentration camps.

German doctors, also prisoners of war, were available to treat any medical problems.
Work crews of up to 20 men were used to pick cotton, however, Barg's group did not have to meet any quotas. In the spring the prisoners helped with irrigation projects, in summer they harvested onions, tomatoes, and other crops. He talks about the danger of rattlesnakes.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Barg says, there was very little interaction between prisoners and farmers and their families. He did not work with Mexican-Americans, Mexicans or Afro-Americans but observed these workers from a distance. "They didn't fare any better than we did", comments Barg.

He left New Mexico in 1946 and was returned to Germany via Le Havre, France. Release took place in Bergen Belsen, formerly a concentration camp.