

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Joseph L. McBride

DATE OF BIRTH: 1942/1943? GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: January 5, 2003

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Quemado Senior Center, Quemado, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Carol Pittman

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: September 5, 2003

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Bob Cogswell

DATE ABSTRACTED: August 24, 2005

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Farm and ranch experiences as a child growing up in Socorro County

DATE RANGE: 1943 -1963

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE:

The consultant was born in Santa Fe, but was raised in Socorro by his great uncle “Nate” McBride, who was a farmer. He attended school in San Acacia and Alamillo. He attended sixth grade in San Acacia. In May of 1955, he moved to California, remaining there until 1992, a span of thirty-seven years.

He recalls that he never learned how to milk a cow. His uncle Nate raised cotton, watermelon, and corn. Crops were irrigated by river water. He remembers that his great-grandparents and grandparents had a homestead in Dusty. They were ranchers.

His mother was born in 1921. Her maiden name was Sorrel. Uncle Nate was a McBride. Nate McBride’s farm is not the Henderson place. The structures from the old McBride place are now gone. The town Post Office is still standing, with some of the boxes still bearing the McBride and Sorrel names.

The consultant recalls that his grandfather moved to the San Acacia and O’Neill area in the early 1930s. After working at ranching, he switched to the Forest service, where he worked with the lookout towers. He is proud of the fact that his grandfather built a lot of “stuff” with the W.P.A [Work Progress Administration].

As a child, the consultant picked cotton, shucked corn at the farm, as well as sold produce around Socorro. He recalls that he once sold \$1500 worth of produce to one customer from his stand on the side of the road. That particular summer, he was able to earn \$6000. He remembers that he would get out of bed between 4 and 4:30 a.m. and work straight through until 5 or 5:30 p.m. He went to bed early, and was up again the next day. In 1955, the FDA [Federal Drug Administration] was created, and private sales of meat, eggs, and poultry were banned. He recalls that the only livestock was a Jersey cow that they milked. Her name was Betsy. One day, Betsy was found shot to death. Uncle Nate suspected who had done it, but could not prove it, and finally dropped the matter. The family no longer owns the land. It was taken for the construction of I-25.

The consultant’s uncle Robert competed in rodeo, riding both Bareback and Saddle bronc. He worked for different ranches in the area, including the Spear ranch. Years later, Robert bought an old stagecoach from the Spears, restored it, and donated it to the San Acacia Museum, where it is now. Robert was also on the “last trail drive” from Arizona to Magdalena.

The consultant’s father was born in Sweetwater, and was also raised by Uncle Nate.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

The consultant continues the interview with a discussion about his grandfather, who rode the rails. After he had been away for six months, he returned only to learn of the death of his wife and the birth of his son, the consultant’s father. Uncle Nate never forgave his grandfather for that. Uncle Nate and the consultant’s father were very close. The consultant recalls that he knows of only of an Aunt Betty and Uncle Robert (both Sorrels) who still live in New Mexico. There are lots of cousins in the state, though. The consultant discusses the various locations of his siblings and other relatives.

When the consultant returned to New Mexico from California in 1992, he inquired of his uncle about going back to ranching or farming. His uncle advised him against it and suggested that he “stick” to what he knows.

The consultant recalls that he stayed in Socorro with his Uncle Robert in 1963, and remembers a humorous incident. They had made homemade root beer and had stored it on the porch overnight. The next morning, bottle caps were found popped and there was root beer all over the porch.

He remembers that the family tried hired help, never hired anyone again after they were caught cheating. His uncle paid them off and fired them on the spot.

Cotton grown on the farm was taken to the cotton gin located between Socorro and San Acacia. The consultant used a tractor to pull a trailer load of cotton and would drive it up under an eave. A pipe would then suck the cotton out of the trailer.

There were two types of corn grown. One was for human consumption and the other was for cattle feed. He recalls that his grandfather grew only corn for cattle feed. All of the corncobs were saved, dried and used as fuel in the woodstove.

The consultant remembers that Uncle Nate only cooked breakfast. His sister Flo owned the farm and cooked lunch and dinner. There were separate houses on the property for Flo and her family, and another house for Uncle Nate and his family.

Houses were built on stilts due to the flooding of the Rio Grande Valley. During one flood in the 1940s, the consultant’s mother had to evacuate the whole family out to the highway for safety. The area has since been sold and re-sold and some of the land is under development. The only farm still operating is an alfalfa farm run by Corgy’s.

He remembers that snowfall would get up to three or four feet, making him living proof of the tales about walking two to three miles to school in the snow. Later, when the family lived in San Acacia, it was only 1/10 of a mile to school. He recalls that in those days, you either attended school or went to work. There really was little choice.