

**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & RANCH  
HERITAGE  
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Austin Vick

DATE OF BIRTH: January 28, 1929 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: September 27, 2007

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Vick home in Las Cruces, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Donna M. Wojcik

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM  OTHER: Cedarvale History Project

TRANSCRIBED: No X

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABSTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: October 10, 2007

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Rural living in Cedarvale, N.M., community

DATE RANGE: 1929-1960

**ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):**

**TAPE ONE, SIDE A:**

The interview begins with a discussion of the family's arrival in New Mexico from Texas to homestead land in the Cedarvale area in the early 1900s. The consultant began school at age five and attended his first year of school at Ft. Sumner because there was no school in Cedarvale. He describes the Cedarvale School. Austin attended New Mexico A & M and took classes in mechanical engineering for two years, after which he switched his major to civil engineering in which he received a degree in 1950.

The effects of weather on the farm/ranch prompted his father to sell the ranch in 1940. Without adequate rains there were no crops, and the land was too dry for cattle. There were no close neighbors in proximity to the homestead with the exception of an uncle; however, community residents did help each other with the harvests. The family grew pinto beans and ran cattle. Vick recalls his parents trading eggs and cream in Estancia in exchange for food items. His father was considered a leader in the Cedarvale community.

The original homestead is discussed. It consisted of 320 acres allotted under the Homestead Act in addition to another 320 acres of improved land. The land was patent land. Improvements to the farm/ranch included fencing. It is explained that fencing was primarily to keep other people's cattle off of your land, rather than to keep yours on your land.

Marketing the pinto beans, notable booms or busts, and advances in technology are discussed. Water sources on the farm/ranch consisted of wells with some cisterns used to collect rainwater. Since the farming was dry land, there was no irrigation. The droughts in the 1940s had an effect on the community, when many landowners were forced to abandon their farms.

Hired help was sometimes used during the harvest season. The farm/ranch did not get electricity until after the ranch was sold in the early 1950s. A typical cycle of work is described, as well as trips made to town for standard supplies.

**TAPE ONE, SIDE B:**

The harvesting and picking of pinto beans is described. Austin remembers that his father bought his first combine in the late 1930s. Austin began milking cows and doing other chores at a young age. A typical day on the farm is described. He jokes that he had his first oral exam at age six and his last oral exam when he graduated. He feels that his family was a typical family for the times. The nearest doctor was located in Willard. The consultant talks about his birth on the farm on a snowy night. He describes the typical meals and states that his favorite meal was pork, cornbread, and milk. He recalls butchering animals and stirring lye soap in a big cast iron pot. The family never had television but did have a radio and used to listen to country music stations.

Winter weather was hard on the cattle, and heavy snow prevented the animals from traveling in to the farm for food, so Austin and his father went out to where the animals were. Yucca stalks were cut, chopped, and fed to the cattle. The family brand has remained in the family since 1934.

Livestock buyers would come to the farm/ranch to pick out cattle they wished to purchase. Vick recalls that the going price was between twenty-five and fifty dollars a head for a two-year-old calf.

The effect of federal programs on the farm/ranch operation is discussed, as well as the need for credit every year. The family did business with a bank in Belen.

**TAPE TWO, SIDE A:**

The interview continues with a look at photographs of the homestead house [see file]. The Vick family raised chickens and turkeys. Austin's best memory was that the work on the farm/ranch was hard but had to be done. Barbed wire was a popular item used for a variety of repairs. Fences were mended only when needed, and the majority of the time it was neighbors who informed you when your fences were down and your animals were on their property.

The consultant describes the greatest hardship as being the loneliness and isolation, due to a lack of close neighbors and the distance from town. Lumber was difficult to get, so his grandfather had built a "half cellar" [half dugout] home, in which half of the home was build above the ground and the other half was in the ground. When lumber was needed for building or home uses such as heating or cooking, the wood was hauled from Cedarvale by horse and wagon. It was a ten-mile trip.

Austin recalls riding to school in the back of a truck. It was fine in the summer, but not in the winter. The owner of the truck eventually built a wood box for the back of the truck; the children would sit in the back of the truck on half-gallon Karo syrup cans.

Austin states that the unique thing about living in a rural area is that there is not a lot of heavy traffic. The disadvantage to living in a rural area is the isolation. The Cedarvale schoolhouse had three grades per room or approximately thirty kids per room.

The consultant believes that the rural way of life will continue in the future, but will be easier on the individual because there is not the isolation that there was when he was growing up. His father was a school bus driver and continued to drive the bus until 1958. [An article regarding this is included in the interview file.]

Most sheep and cattle growers harbor animosity toward each other because the sheep trample the grass and make the land useless for cattle grazing. Cattle need grasses that are up a few inches, so sheep and cattle can never coexist on the same land. After sheep have been grazed on land, it takes up to two years before the cattle can run on it unless there have been good rains and the grasses grow quickly.

Vick's father moved a house onto his property to use as a church house. The house was moved on skids approximately five miles. The building was also used as a meeting hall for area residents. Youth activities in the area consisted of singing conventions. Vick recalls going out to Gran Quivera with a few of his friends to kill rattlesnakes.

Austin believes that central New Mexico will not change as far as land development is concerned because it is still relatively isolated; however money crops need a lot of land to make a profit off sheep or cattle. Drought restricts the number of cattle to eight cows per section, so a lot of land is needed. Drought also puts limitations on crops.

The Cedarvale reunion is held every two years.

**TAPE TWO, SIDE B:**

During his high school years in Corona, Vick played on the basketball team. Teams from Mountainair, Estancia, Vaughn, Corona, and Roswell were part of the Bean Valley Basketball Circuit. He recalls that touch football was also played, but tackles were not permitted because there was no grass to play on.

Vick recalls that his mother lived in Corona in a home that was moved from Ancho, N.M. [The house was the old railroad depot from Ancho, which is halfway between Carrizozo and Corona. Vick arranged for it to be moved from Ancho to the lot in Corona, where it still sits.] Land deeds for the homestead property of several of the Vick family members were discussed, as well as Vick's life after graduation in 1950. He worked at the White Sands Proving Grounds as an engineer, worked with Clyde Tombaugh and telescopes, and continues to serve as a consultant for the Defense Department.