



**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Adolfo Sanchez / Raoul J. Cordova

DATE OF BIRTH: March 25, 1918/ March 26, 1927 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: January 12, 1998 and February 27, 1998

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Health Clinic/Public Library, Belen, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM__x__OTHER_____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: September 25, 1998

NUMBER OF TAPES: Four

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRATED: February 8, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good, however, in the first interview done at the health clinic in Belen, there are interruptions from the clinic loudspeaker. During the second interview the furnace fan can be occasionally heard in the background.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: History and culture of the Hispanic village of Jarales, New Mexico.

DATE RANGE: 1820-1998

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Adolf Sanchez and Raoul Cordova are first cousins, through their maternal grandmother, Marina Sanchez.

Adolf Sanchez was born March 25, 1918 in Jarales and Raoul Cordova was also born in Jarales, March 26, 1927. Both men were born at home with a midwife, Mrs. Rumaldo Moya in attendance. In most cases the midwife was given farm produce in exchange for her services. Adolf Sanchez remembers that Mrs. Moya continued to serve the area up until the time he was a young man. Common herbs used at the time for newborns by *curanderas* were *contra hierba*, *hierba manse* and *manzanilla*. Mrs. Moya served the "length and width of the Middle (Rio Grande) Valley."

Adolf Sanchez states that his family came from Las Vegas, New Mexico, into Valencia and then on to Jarales. He is unsure of why the family made these moves, or indeed, why the family had ever moved to Las Vegas. Jarales was part of the Belen land grant of 125,000 acres. The Belen grant was a community grant. Adolf's father was born in Jarales in 1886, consequently the family made the move from Valencia prior to that time.

The Sanchez family farmed and raised livestock. Once the family settled on the Belen grant Nicolas Sanchez applied for a patent for land outside the grant near Ladron Peak.

The land grant was administered by a three-person elected board, the *fecomisario*. The Belen grant was made by Spain. Overtime "they got careless in the management of this grant. Very careless."

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

The carelessness in management of the grant was both in the financial management and in overgrazing the pastureland. In 1912, the state of New Mexico passed the Community Land Grant Act, which enabled the state to collect taxes from the land grant. The managers of the Belen grant did not collect sufficient monies to cover the taxes. They operated on the *compadre* system, which is described. Because they could not pay their taxes the Belen grant and several others were "sold to the State of New Mexico."

The 125,000 acre Belen grant was eventually purchased in the 1930s by General Thomas Campbell, the "Montana Wheat King." Cordova discusses how the purchase was made. Eventually, Campbell also bought the La Jolla grant. The consultant describes the impact on the people residing on the grant of the loss of communal grazing lands.

The consultant's paternal great-grandfather, Jose Maria Sanchez, was captured by the Navajos when he was a child. With the aid of his Navajo foster mother he ran away from the tribe when he was twelve or fourteen. When Jose Maria returned to his family, who were quite wealthy, he became lonesome for his Navajo foster family. He had his foster family move near him and he cared for them for the rest of their lives.

Another relative on their maternal side of the family was killed by Indians near Pueblo, Colorado, while he and his son were freighting along the Santa Fe trail.

Adolf Sanchez's mother died in the great influenza epidemic of 1918 when he was seven months old. He was raised by his maternal grandmother until he was seven, and thereafter raised by two aunts. In

addition to Adolf's mother, an uncle also died in the epidemic, "the two healthiest [people] in the clan . . . both died."

On the ranch that Nicola Sanchez established at Landron Peak the family raised cattle and sheep. Adolf's father worked part-time for the railroad and earned the then large salary of five dollars a day. His father also worked occasionally in the sawmills in Albuquerque.

Most people farming on the grant used horse-drawn equipment; a plot of six acres was considered a "big field." Primary crops were wheat and corn. Cordova's family owned a flourmill. Typically a farmer would bring in a hundred pounds of wheat and receive fifty pounds of flour. The miller would keep the remaining flour as payment for his services. They also raised chile, beans, corn, peas and kept small vineyards. They made jerky and most families raised a hog. They would often brag about how fat their hogs were and that they ". . . raised 125 pounds of lard."

Each farmer would irrigate from the river by establishing a heading. A heading is described as "nothing else but cuttin' into the river . . . and putting a levee in such a way that the water will flow into the ditch . . ." This method became problematical overtime, the soil became alkaline and land became "swampy." By the 1920s (1925) this became such a problem that the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District was formed.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Each family would own their own farming equipment, "a simple plow and maybe a mower," as well as a team of horses.

The "wet and dry" cycles were a major problem for people who farmed "pre-conservancy." Adolf says the people would ". . . go out with maybe a saint and pray in the ditch banks . . . for rain to save those little corn crops . . ." If there was a crop failure the community would assist those in need. This led to an extended description and discussion of the *matanza*, the communal sharing of a butchered hog. Both agreed that they never hear of "any hunger" among their neighbors.

If a woman was widowed, or if children were orphaned, it was expected that "the whole family would give a hand." They state the Christian ideal, "love thy neighbor as thyself" was put into practice. They were "afraid" and ". . . had that fear of punishment," that if they did not help their neighbor they might get the "short end of it." Cordova states, "fear played a big roll . . ." as to how they got along.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B: Blank

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

This interview session was held on February 27, 1998. Sanchez describes the use of a horse-drawn plow and dump rake. He describes the old stationary hay baler, usually owned by one person who would bale for several others. Followed an extended and detailed explanation of baling hay with a stationary baler. Sanchez states that in the 1930s they were paid thirteen or fourteen dollars for a ton of hay.

Merchants in the community extended credit for farmers and were paid when the farmer sold a product. Cordova's grandfather was a "general merchandiser" and established the Jarales Trading Company in 1914. The farmers carried their *libreta* or notebook, in which they kept track of everything they purchased as a way of avoiding the *pluma cuatra* or merchants "cheating" the customer. Cordova describes some interactions that his grandfather had with customers.

Another way community members might support one another was lending a family a fresh milk cow, if that neighbor's cow was dry. Then when the calf was weaned the cow would be returned to its owner.

Winter wheat was a "good cash crop," and suited to the climate of the area. It is no longer grown in the area because of aphid infestations. In the last thirty years, alfalfa has supplanted wheat as the most important cash crop. While other forage crops such as sudan grass, hegira, and kafir corn also became important crops. The quality of hay produced in the middle valley was very good. Prairie grass, specifically grama grass, was occasionally cut on the mesa for hay in Sanchez's recollection.

When the communal grazing lands were sold to General Campbell, people continued to live on their small plots of land in the valley, as "trustees of the grant had been issuing deeds to the people," and "there's the source of their title."

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

The small individually owned plots were irrigated and consequently they did some subsistence farming and some cash crops. Life was more difficult, however, because they had lost their income from the cattle that had been formerly raised on the grazing land. (Cordova discusses again the sale of the communal lands to General Campbell in the 1930s.) Cordova states that some families lost fifty percent of their income when the grazing lands were lost.

Both consultants discuss their educational experiences with emphasis on various school buses that were used.

Sanchez and Cordova both served in the military during World War II. Cordova, and all the male members of his high school class, were drafted into the military after they had completed the eleventh grade. They reported to Fort Bliss June 1, 1945. Cordova discusses his reaction to the institutionalized discrimination he observed while stationed in the South. Both men attended college following their discharge from the service; Sanchez had started college before he entered the military in 1942.

They discuss the feeling people have for their small farms, their "attachment" to the land. When the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District was established many more small property owners lost their land because they were unable to pay the taxes. Sanchez states that although his father struggled to find the money for taxes, he was able to do so and so they "saved" their "pieces of land." Both again discuss the condition of the land before the conservancy district was established.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A:

Continue discussion of the land conditions that led to the acceptance of the conservancy district. Cordova states that "a good ninety percent of all the lands in the middle Rio Grande Valley were sold to the State of New Mexico at one time or another," because of the sale of the communal grazing land and the loss of land due to inability to pay water assessments once the conservancy district was established.

The assessment for water was \$5 an acre (in 1998 it is \$33 an acre), a huge amount in a basically subsistence farming economy.

The consultants were questioned about the administration of justice in the 1920s and 1930s in their community. They described the functions of the "*el Juez de Paz*" and the "*el Procurador*." They also described some of the informal methods of ensuring community harmony.

The interview ends with each consultant discussing the hardships they remembered as well as the good times they cherished. They also describe that marriages were most often between non-related members of the community.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE B: Blank