

**NEW MEXICO
FARM & RANCH
HERITAGE
MUSEUM**

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT**

CONSULTANT: Ralph Dunlap

DATE OF BIRTH: February 5, 1927 SEX: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: April 30, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Dunlap's shop – Lincoln, NM

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: December 30, 1996

NUMBER OF TAPES: Three

ABTRACTOR: O'Cain

DATE ABSTRACTED: April 20, 1999

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good, although somewhat muted.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Ralph Dunlap discusses his family history of homesteading on the eastern plains of New Mexico after the turn of the century. He describes his work of 30 years (1952 – 1982) as a County Agent in Lincoln County. He worked to improve apple and wool production, and in later years worked with youth programs (4-H) and economic development. He details his involvement, as a Foundation Board member, in the founding of New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum.

DATE RANGE: 1919 - 1996

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Ralph Dunlap was born in Melrose, NM, 50 miles west of Clovis. His father was superintendent of schools there.

Dunlap's grandfather, W. O. Dunlap, lived at a place called Dunlap, 30 miles south of Fort Sumner. He located homesteads for people interested in homesteading in eastern New Mexico.

His mother's parents homesteaded between 1905 – 1910, south of Lordsburg.

His grandfather Dunlap took some buffalo in lieu of pasture rent from Buffalo Jones, who ran a type of Wild West show. The buffalo were difficult to manage, not practical.

Ralph Dunlap was reared on his maternal grandparent's ranch near Lordsburg. They left the ranch because his mother died without leaving a will and the estate had to be settled. They grew corn, milo, and vegetables there, but not cotton since his father had a "grudge" against cotton. They raised 80 head of cattle, and between 1939 – 1942 they raised hogs.

Dunlap left home when he was 18. Attended one semester of college at New Mexico State University and then entered the Air Force. He returned to New Mexico State University after completing 18 months of military service. He completed his college degree with the assistance from the G. I. Bill. Describes the housing for married students that were available on campus. To supplement the money he was given through the G.I. Bill, he worked at the Animal Science Department and for the Extension Service.

When he completed college in 1950, he went to work for the Extension Service in Colfax County. He went to Lincoln County in 1952, and worked there as a County Agent until his retirement in 1982.

Relates an anecdote about the buffalo trying to get under his parent's claim shack when they were first married (1919). His mother played piano for two hours to frighten the buffalo away.

Describes difficulty in herding buffalo. They do not have a well-established herding instinct, and will challenge a horse. He watched some buffalo being worked in South Dakota, and describes the importance of moving buffalo "casually." His father said a buffalo could jump an eight-foot fence "flat-footed."

His mother died in 1940, when he was 13. He believes it was as a result of diabetes, which was untreated. She gave birth to five children in seven years. His father was not allowed to teach because he had contracted tuberculosis during his military service during WWI. During the Depression his father went to work as a foreman on a WPA project. He was paid \$ 150.00 monthly for this work.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Dunlap graduated from Lordsburg High School in 1944.

He spent the latter years (1979 – 1981) of his career working overseas in such areas as Israel, Egypt, and Tunisia. He assisted with establishing agriculture fairs and opening markets for fruit.

He relates the history of the County Agents in Lincoln County. They had an early County Agent Cap Sterling. He became embroiled in some local problems and moved to Silver City in the early 1920's. It wasn't until the Agriculture Adjustment Act was passed that a County Agent was again hired in Lincoln County. His name was Carl Radcliff and he was hired in 1938. Radcliff had disagreements with the County Commissioners and was terminated from the position. Austin Albert served as County Agent from 1951 – 52, and Ralph was hired in 1952. He was hired primarily to work with Lincoln County's apple marketing group. Dunlap focused primarily on apple production and sheep in his early years in Lincoln County. He did not have help with extension work until 1968, when a Home Agent was hired.

He organized a County Achievement Day for the children in 1953, and then a county fair in Capitan.

Discusses the evolution of his work in the 30 years he was Lincoln County Agent. Apples became less viable as a crop due to changes in the weather – spring freezes - that would destroy the entire crop. Now, only 200 acres in Lincoln County are planted in apples. But the other major change has been in apple marketing. For example, apples from Washington State are now readily available all over the country. Also a local apple market was lost when crews were no longer needed to pick cotton.

Although in the early years of apple production a number of varieties (Jonathon, Star King) were grown in the valley, in the 1960's most people started growing Red Delicious apples, as that was where the market was. He discusses why the apples bought in supermarkets do not have much flavor.

According to some core samples that were taken, apple trees were first planted in the valley in 1885. The varieties grown in those days were the Ben Davis, Arkansas Black, and the Winter Pearmain.

The orchards in the Pecos Valley (around Roswell) were destroyed by a devastating freeze in 1931. The freeze "split" the trees open and killed them. The apple industry never recovered in the Pecos Valley. It is also a less than ideal climate for apples there because of the summer heat.

He discusses testing cattle to certify the county Brucellosis free in the 1960's. Describes some of the experiences the veterinarians and he had during testing at some of the ranches.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Later in his career as a County Agent, there was more emphasis placed on economic development. Encouraging tourism was one example. Also worked quite a lot with 4-H programs.

He worked with a program that sprayed most of Lincoln County for grasshoppers.

The sheep industry in Lincoln County has declined due to predators. The eagles killed up to 20 percent of the lamb crop, and in 1972 a moratorium was placed on killing eagles. Prior to the moratorium, the individual hired by the Lincoln County Wool Growers killed 300-600 eagles a year. He hunted the eagles from an airplane.

Coyote predation was discussed. The coyotes were poisoned with a canine pesticide 10-80. When ranchers started putting their sheep in net wire fences, 20 or 30 people on horseback made coyote “drives,” killing all the coyotes in the pasture. Around 1972, the use of 10-80 was also banned. Now they use steel traps to control the coyotes, some are still using cyanide pellets, and some are using an Australian electric fence.

Discusses that in Lincoln County, a rancher could raise 16 cow/calf pairs to a section. and five ewes for every one cow. Most Lincoln County ranchers ran both cattle and sheep, because of the preferred forage of each species.

Over time Ralph Dunlap’s work as the Lincoln County Agent evolved. He began working more with youth programs, like 4-H, and in economic development. In 1969, he began working with the Lincoln County Centennial, and then saw the advantages of promoting the history of Lincoln County as a way to improve economic conditions.

Discusses the frustrations (paperwork) and rewards (working with children) as a County Agent.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

He describes the purchase of the Carbajal House in Lincoln, an adobe built in the late 19th century. He also purchased the 16-foot-square Huff house. He observed that many of the old adobes are this size, and speculates that the builders may have only been able to haul 16 foot long vigas on their wagons. The Huff house was built in 1860, and was at one time the center of the Lincoln “red light” district.

Discusses the 1972 Lincoln historic zoning ordinance that controls improvements and changes to historic properties.

In 1982, Ralph Dunlap became a Mason. He studied the history of the Masons and developed a traveling exhibit of Masonic history.

Discusses the folk pageant held in Lincoln every August. It first started in the 1940’s. The original script was written by Work Progress Administration writers in the 1930’s. Discusses how the history of Lincoln continues to impact in the present-day.

Begins to detail his involvement in the founding of the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

Dunlap remembers being approached by Dr. Stephens about setting up a heritage museum shortly after his retirement in 1982. Dunlap arranged a meeting of the Heritage Board with Robert O. Anderson, who wanted to use Fort Stanton as a locale for a museum of the horse. He states that Dr. Stephens wanted the heritage museum located in Las Cruces.

He would like to see the Museum (in Las Cruces) used as a base operation to provide expertise to museums throughout the state. Discussed a new fund raising concept: selling brands in cement blocks that will be placed in the Museum patio.

States that the Museum was originally going to be placed on the campus of New Mexico State University.

Discusses issues related to the placement of the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum under the Office of Cultural Affairs, State of New Mexico, and the suggestion in January 1995, of placing the museum under the auspices of New Mexico State University.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

Continues to discuss issues with the Museum, including service on the Foundation and Museum Board, and Lana Dickson's service as Acting Administrator of the Foundation Board.

He doesn't anticipate that the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum will be self-supporting, because of the number and variety of exhibits that must be developed and maintained.