



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: William G. Fischer

DATE OF BIRTH: January 12, 1938 GENDER: Male

DATE (S) OF INTERVIEW: July 16, 2002

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Interviewer's home in Las Cruces, NM

INTERVIEWER: Ronald E. Nelson

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: August 6, 2000

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Ron Nelson

DATE ABSTRATED: August 28, 2002

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Recollections of German prisoners of war working on his father's farm, south of Carlsbad, NM

DATE RANGE: 1944-1945

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Mr. Fischer came into contact with POWs while living on his father's farm, located south of Carlsbad, New Mexico. He also saw POWs working at St. Edwards School.

His father picked up the POWs at the old CCC camp at the corner of Pierce and Eighth Streets in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The prisoners had certain quotas or goals to attain and the elder Mr. Fischer would give them tobacco and coffee as an incentive. They would take this back to camp, loosely stored in their pockets, to avoid detection by the guards.

Picking cotton is described, along with the civility of the prisoners.

Guards were not seen very often.

While doing work at St. Edwards, the prisoners asked the parish priest if they could play the organ. The priest assented and the result was beautiful playing and singing of "Silent Night".

Mr. Fischer speaks of his German ancestry and how this helped in establishing relationships. When he discovered there was no salt in the camp, he gave the prisoners some – again, loosely.

He tells of his sister's recollection that the prisoners built a monument made of stone in the shape of an iron cross in a park on Richardson Street in Roswell, NM.

Mr. Fischer states that while they were warned to watch for escape attempts, he never heard of one. He does remember that children would, sometimes, taunt the prisoners with shouts of 'Heil Hitler' and the Nazi salute.

Use of prisoners in the community was widespread.

Mr. Fischer thinks that the interchange of people during the war helped in restoring order following WWII.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B: Blank