

Dave Farr Oral History

Part II: Homestead, Ranch and Family History

Farr Ranch, East of Horse Springs, New Mexico

Collected by Brenda Wilkinson, BLM Socorro Field Office

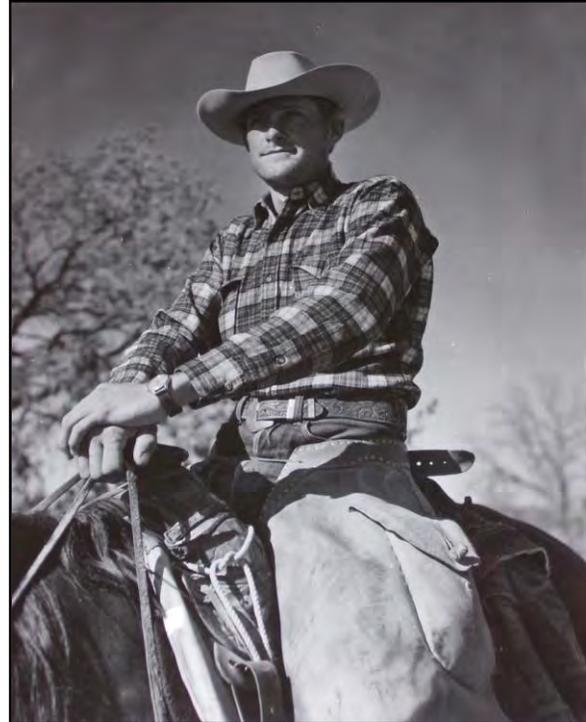


INTRODUCTION

With roots in Germany and Scotland, the Farr family has been in the United States since the early 1800s, and in New Mexico since the late 1800s. George Farr, Dave Farr's great grandfather, was born in Germany in 1818 and received American citizenship in Cole County, Missouri in 1854. The family had left Scotland for Germany in the 1600s and trace their roots to a town named Farr in the northern tip of Scotland.

Farr's great grandmother, Ida Murray, was born in Bisbee, Arizona. Her mother was a French Canadian who migrated through New Orleans to the mines in Arizona, where Ida was born.

Dave Farr's grandfather (also David Farr) homesteaded at Patterson Cutoff, and his father (also George Farr, with his wife Edith Funk) homesteaded on the Plains of San Agustín, east of Horse Springs, where Dave and Karen Farr still live. They built up the large ranch the family operates today by acquiring additional land over the years. The ranching family tradition continues with Roy Farr, Dave and Karen's son, who also lives on the ranch with his family, and daughter Amy, who lives on another company ranch near Crownpoint, New Mexico.



The interviews took place at the Farr home east of Horse Springs in February 2008, with clarifications provided in January and February, 2010. Mark Matthews (BLM Socorro Field Office Assistant Field Manager) and Jeff Fassett (BLM Rangeland Management Specialist) were present. BLM archaeologist Brenda Wilkinson conducted the interview. Maps were spread out on the table during the interview, and some comments are in reference to the maps. Mrs. Farr (Karen) was out calving heifers, but returned home at the end of the interview.

EARLY DAYS IN NEW MEXICO

Brenda Wilkinson (BW) When did your family get here (to the ranch)?

DF Well, nineteen four. And this is that old ranch in Patterson Cutoff. Sheep. Well, they had sheep and cattle from the very beginning. They added on here; there's two log rooms, and then they built a rock commissary there. Well, the rock commissary was much later. They just had two log rooms there for quite a few years.

BW And this was your grandparents' homestead?

DF Yes. But that's in later years [the photo], 'cause they already had a Aeromotor windmill. Originally, they had an Eclipse wooden windmill. The Eclipse had a wooden wheel and wooden tails. Lots of bluffs up there, and every time a cow bawls, why it echos.



David Farr Homestead (Dave Farr's grandfather),
Patterson Cutoff, patented to David Farr in 1910

DF [R. C.] Patterson, over here, other side of Horse Springs, had the contract to furnish beef for the Cavalry at Warm Springs, Ojo Caliente. So, he'd either drive or haul the beef all the way up here, over the Divide. This is Patterson Cutoff, you get over the Divide and go down another canyon. Yeah, went by Paddy's Hole. Went off here and then probably Patterson cutoff here, and that goes on down to Warm Springs.

Mark Matthews (MM) So you guys had a place in Albuquerque?

DF Yeah, meat market. On second street. It was probably started, I would say in the late 1800s. It was before my grandfather ever come back here from California.

MM When did you close it up?

DF Before my time. I was never in it, that I know of. But my father worked there. Makin' sausage, and cuttin' up meat. They had a good deal goin'. There was five brothers, you know. And they were in Missouri, and one of 'em stole a mule. And boy, they gathered their belongings and took out for New Orleans, before they hung this one brother you know. They went down across Panama on mules, and back up to California, settled in Chico. Their wives went by boat, I think, and then they all went by mule. Then gradually Bill Farr come back and opened the meat market. And he sent for the other brothers and told 'em, "Get out here. Good business and I need help."

So, couple or three brothers come, worked there for a couple of months, and then they said, "Well, we need some wages; we've been here a long time." Bill said, "I didn't tell ya I'd pay ya anything; I just said I need some help!" [laughter] So they finally made up, and uh, Ed Farr'd buy cattle, Joe Farr had a farm right where the freeway crosses, down at Isleta. He owned that right to the north. He'd hold the cattle there and they'd butcher 'em and take 'em to the meat market. That

was three [brothers]. And then my grandfather would stay out here and run this and buy some cattle, too.

Then they were in the ranching business other places in New Mexico before here, by the Manzano mountains. My father was born on a ranch there, at a place called Las Moyas, a ranch in the Manzano Mountains. And then they had another ranch by Rosedale...southwest of Magdalena. I don't know the exact place. My grandmother'd tell me, they were a day's wagon trip out of Magdalena, and everybody'd stop and spend the night, and turn their team loose, same thing going on. They'd buy supplies, and all she did was cook all the time for all these travelers. Yeah, so she didn't like Rosedale [laughter].

DF This is a homestead. My father homesteaded here.



Location of interview, George D. Farr Homestead. The home was built in 1920, he was married in 1923, and the homestead was patented in 1925.

BW Were there any buildings when you got the ranch? I guess it depends on which piece.

DF Well, they gradually acquired more country; here there was nothin'. The homesteads, there was an old V Cross T camp over where Roy lives, a two room adobe house. And then maybe, only other place that I can think of would have been Fullerton Ranch, and they bought that in '27. But I think Fullerton, he built his houses out on the flat. He said that's so he could see the Indians comin'. So this was back when there was Indian trouble. Did you know that Fullerton was the captain of the first mounted police in New Mexico? I've got a book but it's loaned out now. They formed a mounted police and there was only ten, twelve men that eventually turned into the state police. He was the captain for one year. It was a political deal you know, so somebody else was elected and they kicked him out and got somebody else to run it. They were mainly after cattle thieves.

MM I didn't realize the V Cross T was running cattle this far north.

DF That would have been in the V Cross T [now the Adobe Ranch] time, ya know. There's a book tells all about it, but it's hard to find.

SHEEP

DF A sheep is just like a cow only ten times slower, that's what my father used to say. We

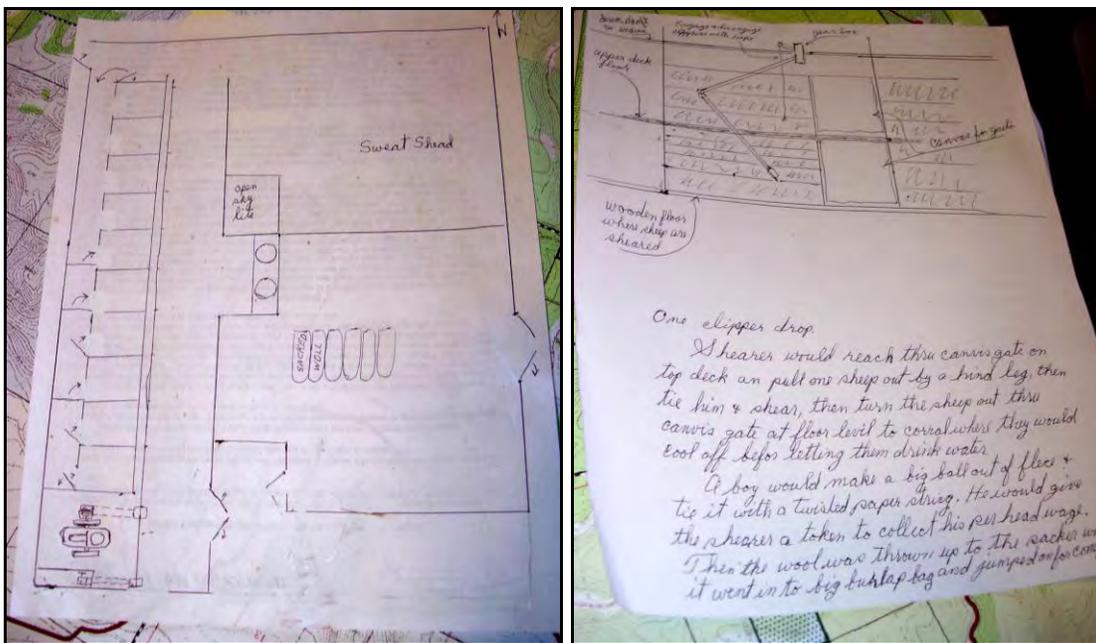
used to have a shearing shed here, and I drew a picture of it, and we sheared here and Hubbles sheared here and Fullerton, and Juan Garcia, and it was really an efficient deal. They had an old Fairbanks Morse engine, and then they had ten troughs or ten shearers. And they'd bring the sheep in here to a sweat shed and - I don't even know, do sheep sweat?

Jeff Fassett (JF) No, they pant usually.

DF Well, anyway, they call this a sweat shed, cause they had to call it somthin' I guess (laughter). And they they'd take these sheep up on a elevated ramp, and the shearers would be out here...

BW Can I take a picture of this?

DF Five bucks (laughter). It took me a long time to draw that. But it's a really efficient operation.



“This is a drawing of the drops where they attached their clippers, and the drawing is just one drop. There was a total of ten drops, so they could shear 10 sheep at a time. And behind that there was a ramp that made two stories there, and they'd pull the sheep out of the top ramp and shear 'em and turn 'em back out at ground level.”

DF You see, the sheep would be up here, the shearer out here, and he'd reach through a, just a canvas there—blind, grab a sheep, pull him out here, shear him, back out on ground level. And the wool would go out on the floor and some kid'd come along and bundle it up with twisted paper string and then he'd give the shearer a token, 'cause that's the way he got paid. And he'd take it over here to the, whatever they called it, it's out front here...

JF Burlap bag stands...

DF Them big old bags, and there was a guy up there just jumpin' like a trampoline, all day, and then they'd sew the sacks shut and roll 'em out here and then load 'em on the wagons. We've got some pictures of wagons with big wool sacks on 'em.

BW Where was this camp?

DF About right over Taylor place, just...you can see it out the window. It's all tore down now. Just some old posts stickin' up

MM So, did you draw this up because you're going back to sheep? (laughs)

DF No. Just so somebody can visualize what they used to do.

MM How many shearers did you guys bring?

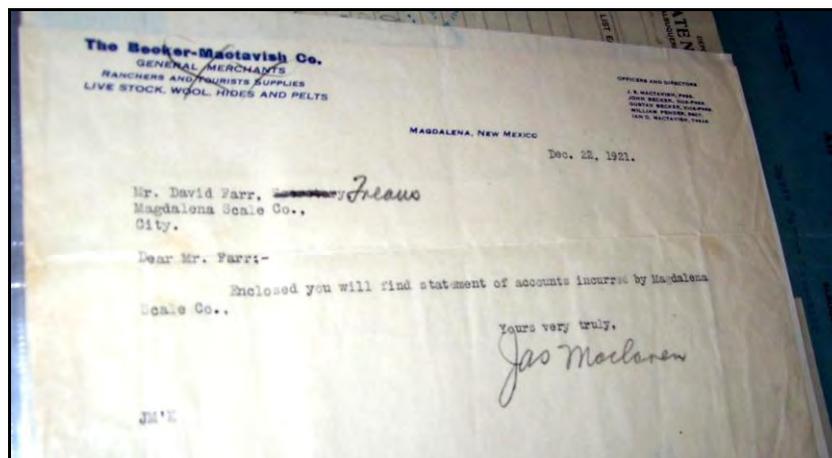
DF Well there were ten, you see we had ten clippers drawn on that thing, so there'd be ten here and there. It's drive shaft driven. Drive shaft run 'em all.

BW When was that?

DF Well, from '38 on prior. Yeah, 'cause I can just remember, I think they sold all the sheep in '37, '38. I'd've been about 6, 7 years old, that's all I can remember.

THE FAMILY ALBUM

DF A bunch of stuff pertaining to the scales like, they sold stock I think, and that's the way they were able to build the scales. And then I think they even paid dividends, eventually.



DF That car has to be a 1920 somethin'.



Joaquin Encinias, Francisco Pena, George Farr, 1919 (written on back)

MM Did your dad always run Herefords?

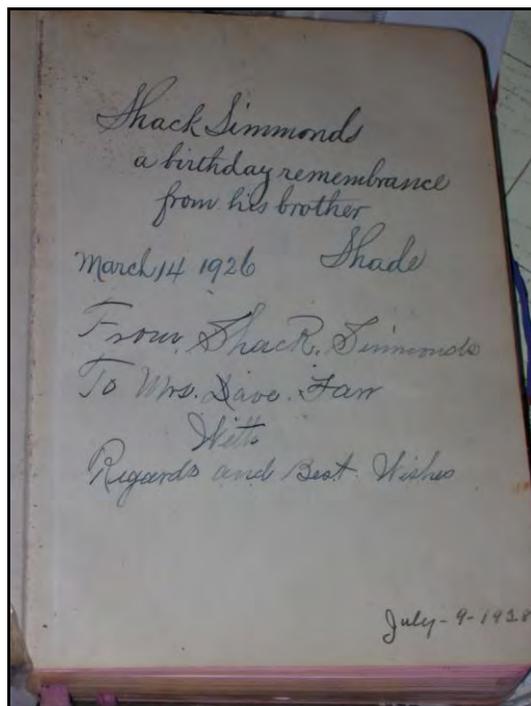
DF Since before the 20s they had Hereford bulls. You see, on that one paper, we had a partner named Robinson.

BW And do you know who this is on horseback here?

DF Well judgin' from the color of the horse, that might be my father and Shack. That's Shack Simmonds – an ol' time cowboy from England.



DF He's supposed to be one of the best cowboys around here. I don't know that he ever worked here, but my father worked with him at a lot of places when they'd gather cattle with a wagon. And a whole bunch of men would be together. He was kind of the foreman manager for Abb Alexander. Abb Alexander was one of the original ranchers down by Apache Creek. 'Course that's before I was born. I never knew 'im. He probably worked cattle here but representing Abb Alexander. But he ranged all over the country because of no fences you know.



Bible given to Shack Simmonds by his brother Shade, and then given to Dave Farr's grandmother by Shack.

DF There's a Bible that he gave to my grandmother. I guess that come from England. Ol' Shack, he must not a had too much use for it (laughter). That's the way they used to write, ya know, everybody had a real perfect hand.

MAGDALENA

DF There's Magdalena:



DF My mother's family owned that hotel and she worked there as the waitress and making up beds and everything. And I think I've told Mark that we'd go to Magdalena and rent a room and my mother would be there, demanding "no rooms over the saloon" (laughter) because she'd seen too many pistol shots through the roof of their saloon. And I don't think it's of any importance, see they were all German, and the hotel was named Swastika. And then WWII or

WWI started, and they changed the name real quick. Well that's the two names it had. And they all spoke German among the family at home. So that was the reason they originally used that name, before it was a bad thing, which it really was during the world wars. And you know the Indians used the swastika on their blankets but it was usually made backwards from the way the Germans printed it. My mother and father were married in 1923, and so she was part of the family that run the hotel, so she worked there and then over at the old bank.

DF That's the depot.



DF This is the corner, it was a northeast corner. Big building. Did a lot of business with the ranchers. Mercantile, groceries....this is still standing, I believe.

JF It's a gallery. An art gallery...I think they had it open as an art gallery here recently.

BW So this one it says the Cash-s, isn't this near...right near the new gas station?



DF Well, I'll have to look when I go by. I haven't paid any attention. It's on that south side of the main highway, and it would either...that new gas station would be on down west, or right across the street, you know...to the east. It's in that location.

BW On the back they say July 1937. They're stamped. So that's when the film was processed.

DF That building was standing and in use until not too many years ago.

BW And it burned?

DF I think so. Roy Vinyard had a big manufacturing plant in there. Do you 'member Roy?

MM I know some Vinyards in Magdalena.

DF Same outfit. But Roy drove the truck, and then he hired a lot of people and they just made, halters, you know out of nylon, rayon, for horses and shipped them all over the world. Made 'em right in that building.

DF It just...the only connection is that building, that's the last time it was in use.



George, Dave and Ed Farr (Harvey Caplin photo)



Dave Farr (Harvey Caplin photo)



George Farr (Harvey Caplin photo)

DF Those were taken in the early '50's, a lot of 'em. And you've heard of Harvey Caplin? He was a professional photographer, and he come out, got on a horse, and went with us three or four days and took a lot of good pictures. And it was at the beginning of color film. The only place you could get it developed was New York City. And so Karen and I went by and picked out all the good pictures. Harvey shipped 'em to New York to be duplicated, and they were all lost in the mail. So, there went all our good pictures and then we had to go back and pick out these second rate ones. Now I guess you can get color film developed anywhere...

WEATHER AND HARDSHIP

BW How was your operation affected by winter weather? Do you recall any major losses due to winter weather?

DF Uh, let's see. We had two big snow storms that I can remember here. I think one was in 1968 and the next one was exactly 20 years later. And we had to break trails for the cattle to go up in the mountains and get to the south slope where the snow had melted. The south slopes were melted off. So big snow storms are somethin' we're afraid of. Now there's been more here

that I never saw, but they're pretty infrequent, fortunately.

BW Did you lose a lot of cattle?

DF Oh, we didn't have any death loss, but we were able to get 'em to the mountains.

BW And then you mentioned that big drought, '50 to '57, do you remember any others?

DF It's a, almost a continuous drought...with a few good years.

BW But nothin' that stands out like '50 to '57.

DF Nah, that was a...really somethin' there.

BW Were there any fences on the ranch?

DF Oh fences, the ranch wasn't fenced 'til '57 and '58. The Hubbells was over there, they didn't want any fence to run sheep. Other side was uh, Luna-Vergere, they ran sheep. They didn't want any fence. So we had to get on our horse and go bring them cattle home. Until Oliver Lee moved in [1950s], and we built fence. Kenneth Mimms had the Y Ranch leased, and we got together and built that. [MM says Oliver Lee and George Farr built the fence.]

BW When did the ranch get electricity?

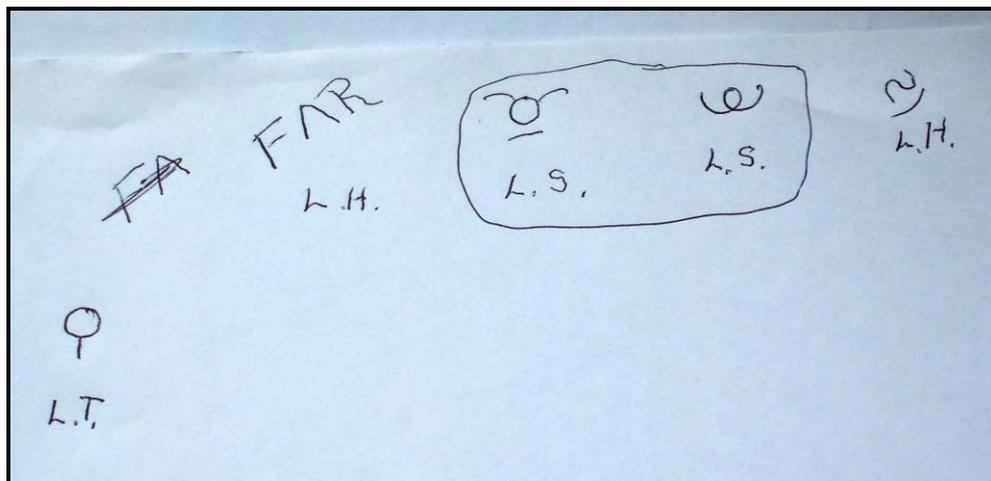
DF They had a wind charger way back in the '40s I guess. The late '40s. And they got REA [Rural Electrification Administration] here, probably '59, or somewhere in there. Yeah, that would be '59. Telephones in the 80s maybe? Yeah, Catron County was the only county seat in the U.S. without a telephone (laughter).

THE BRANDS

BW And your brand? Did you say earlier that it changed?

DF Oh, we haven't had many brands.

BW Can you draw them on a piece of paper? I've got an extra piece right here.



DF That's on the left hip, and left shoulder. And just in recent years, due to cross breedin'. But those are the main two. (circled)

BW Were they used according to family member, or are they from different time periods?

DF No, this is a company brand. I changed to this, 'cause little less burnin'. This we adopted for cross breeds – to keep the blood pure. And then we changed to this to meet requirements of the packers....'cause they don't want brands on the part of the hide that makes choice leather.

BW Oh, okay. And what about this one?

DF That's just an old brand, I can remember seein' one cow with that on, when I was little. Too big, too much burnin', so they quit it. They're supposed to pay ya more for a, hide without brand, you know. You're allowed to draw down on the thigh, and we sell cattle direct to the packer. And I think one time we got a little bonus for going to all that work, for gettin' that different brand. Then, I forgot to add one brand that was my mother's brand. I don't know if you want it or not. We sold the brand. It was very simple. It was on the left neck. It was a bar, and back toward the animal's tail was a slash running from the upper right down to the lower left. A bar slash.

THE FARR OPERATION

Dave Farr told me that there never was a spring on the ranch. They never had a spring until they acquired Jack Spring. They did drill wells, and early wells were drilled with horse-powered rigs. Ben Kemp drilled about four wells before 1910, with horses.

BW Describe a round of work throughout the year, as you recall it from your childhood.

DF Well, you ride fences and fix 'em all year round. And you fix windmills, year round. And then of course, you had the spring round-up and brand, move the cattle to the mountains. And you have the fall round up and ship cattle. Winter you'd throw a lotta ice out of the water troughs. In fact, if you guys stick around, we can go pull a well today (laughter)!

BW When was additional labor hired?

DF From the beginning, they had shepherders. Well, if they didn't herd 'em, the coyotes'd, bobcats and lions would put 'em outta business in the matter of a month. Or less.

BW And then later on, when it was cattle?

DF Well, it'd probably be my father and maybe one man. Probably year round. And he'd maybe get some help to deliver cattle, and brand.

BW That's a lot of country to handle on your own.

DF Well, they always had to work shorthanded.

BW How did your family market the livestock in the early days?

DF Oh, they'd meet cattle buyers, and contract the cattle by private treaty. I know one time my father took a bunch of cattle to Magdalena--big calves. And they were worth a nickel a pound, but he couldn't find a buyer, and they were in that stockyards in Magdalena. And he met Joe Swartzman, and Joe said, "Well, I'll give ya six cents for the calves that are worth a nickel, but, I can't pay ya. You let me take 'em and feed 'em and butcher 'em and sell the meat, and then I'll pay ya." So they shook hands, and away the calves went. After all this time...he got paid, with just a handshake deal...and that's the way it used to be. Now you gotta get advanced wired deposits before the cattle leave or you're liable not to get any money. That's not with all the buyers, but some of 'em.

BW Before the cattle, when your family had sheep, do you know how they marketed the sheep?

DF Well, they always had cattle and sheep, but I don't know anything about how they sold the sheep. All I know is that they'd load 'em on double deck cars in Magdalena. They'd ship the wool, I think to New Orleans, and go by boat around to New York. They'd do that so it'd absorb moisture, and weigh more when it got there (laughter). Somethin'--what I heard, I don't know.

BW How have market fluctuations affected the profitability of your ranch?

DF Well, drastically! We'd sell bred heifers for four hundred dollars a head, and we've sold 'em for twelve hundred and fifty dollars a head. And I remember one cattle buyer...he was a friend of ours, and he came out and offered my father a certain price for a bunch of heifers. My father didn't take it. He left, the buyer did. They got together not too long later, a month, and they both decided - that's when two damn fools met. 'Cause the buyer offered way too much, and my father wouldn't take it (laughter). So it changed that much in a week or two.

BW In the early days, was it necessary to arrange for credit?

DF Yeah. My father told me a lot of bad stories about borrowin' money.

BW Do you know where he got money from?

DF Yeah. He'd borrow money from the First National Bank in Albuquerque, and maybe need a loan extension. And he'd go up there and sit all day tryin' to see the bank president, and he said he could watch the president sittin' at his desk, nobody in there, and the president wouldn't see 'im. Hafta go back and wait all day again. So that's trouble isn't it? That's during the Depression.

BW Other than weather-related losses, did you have any major losses related to disease, predation, or toxic vegetation

DF Oh, occasionally a little. We lost...I don't know...fifteen or twenty at once on the poison weed.

BW And predators...?

DF That's constant. Well, you lose calves to the coyotes, and now it's startin' with the wolves. This year we lost three cows and a yearling to a bear. They trapped the bear over on our neighbors. We had a trapper out here trying to trap 'im, but he'd already moved. So they killed that bear...must've been the same one, we never had no more trouble.

BW What about disease?

DF Well, when we really started using trucks, that's when the disease come in. 'Cause they'd truck cattle from Florida to California, and come and load calves here, and a little manure'd fall out, and germs in it. Well, we could lose forty, fifty head right in a hurry there before we'd found the right vaccine. And that took several years. So anyway, a lot of diseases have been spread by the trucks. Be in the eastern seaboard, and two or three days later they're loadin' here. And then our cattle aren't immune to those foreign diseases.

BW Can you describe any measures taken to increase profitability, such as diversification, hybrid livestock or technology?

DF Well, I don't know. Roy's used the technology where we about have the diseases whipped. We don't have much death loss to disease anymore. And the cross breedin' has helped, and the weights of the cattle. And he's even sold some cattle on uh, all natural basis. You know, where they haven't received any antibiotics and all this stuff. No implants. We implanted for a few years. We quit it, so the cattle are pretty pure other than vaccines and shots they allow for immunization.

BW Do you get more money for 'em then?

DF We only did it once, and it was very profitable. We made a hundred dollars a head.

BW Really? I think more and more people want that.

DF Apparently so. He's entered two more truckloads this year and we'll see what happens. They're pretty strict.

GOVERNMENT

BW How did it affect you, the Taylor Grazing Act?

DF Well, they allotted us country that we could use, three miles from the waters, and before that it was open range. So then you knew where you could run cattle, I guess, and where you could build fences.

BW Who is that??

DF This is Johnny Greenwald.



George Farr with Johnny Greenwald a reporter from the New Mexico Stockman magazine.

DF Johnny Greenwald, he was the original district manager or whatever you call 'em. Fact, I was a little kid, I can remember ridin' around with Johnny and somebody and my father, and they were allotin' all these permits, right after the Taylor Grazing Act. There wasn't any BLM then.

MM The Grazing Service. They were called the Grazing Service. And The Taylor Grazing Act set up the Grazing Advisory Board, and they're the ones that did the adjudication.

SUPPLIES

DF They, my grandmother and Karen, grew a garden. My mother never did, 'cause she lived over there in alkali dirt and nuthin'd grow. Just a little garden.

BW For store-bought things, how often did you go to town?

DF Maybe every other month back in the '30s, '40s. Well, they had two pickups and both batteries would go dead. They'd just sit there, so how long does that take [laughter]?

BW And now how often do you go to town?

DF Every time I have a doctor appointment. That's [laughter] pretty regular.

BW Do you have any idea, earlier than the '30s and '40s how often they would go?

DF Well, I was born in '31 and my gosh, I've heard 'em talk about - it'd take two days to go to Magdalena in a wagon, and two days to come back. So, you know they wouldn't make that trip any more often than they'd a have to've.

CHILDHOOD

BW What are your best memories of growing up and living on the ranch?

DF Just goin' a horseback and doin' everything. It's all a lot of fun.

BW What were the greatest hardships?

DF I don't know. We had to get inside these old tanks and clean 'em and scrape 'em and paint 'em, and fix fence and... Why, the ranch life's so much fun for a kid. Why, it'd make ya not want to go to college.

BW Can you describe a typical day on the ranch when you were a child?

DF I don't know. When I was a child, my brother and I'd play, and very occasionally some stranger'd come in, like a cattle buyer. We'd run and hide, because we had never seen any other people [laughter].

BW At what age did you start doing chores?

DF Before grade school...I'd been five years old you know. I'd have to get the milk cows up and milk 'em.

BW At what age was a child expected to do the same work as an adult?

DF I don't know. It would be before you got out of high school, I guess. Roy was shoeing his own horses when he was still in high school.

BW Can you describe a typical breakfast, lunch and dinner when you were growing up?

DF Well, you'd eat the sow belly for breakfast, and my father didn't believe in lunch or dinner and, [laughter] so we didn't... All we got--two slices of bread and a piece of cheese you know. Went horseback, and that was lunch. And there's all kind of things you know, grind up jerky and make frijoles casau, and mainly things that aren't perishable you know, in the summer. If we had any meat it was jerky. Well, I know we used to eat a lot of salt side. You know what that is? They call it sow belly. Yeah, we'd eat a lot of that 'cause no refrigeration. And a lot of beans. That's all during the summer, and then winter, why we'd be in school. My grandmother couldn't live here 'cause of the altitude so... We were so far from schools, so we stayed with her and went to school in Albuquerque.

BW Did your family have any special traditions or rituals they followed?

DF I don't know, work I guess [laughter].

LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

BW What did your parents and you do for leisure activities?

DF Work. Ah, we'd go to rodeos. Well, occasionally we'd all go horseback, just sightseeing, and that's what we were doing when we - well we were really looking for cattle too - when we saw the big pine tree grewed up in the middle of the Hogan. That was kind of a vacation, just go camp. There was always kind of work mixed in with it too. Camping's a big deal for kids, and my father's always lookin' for cow tracks, so that would've been recreation on the ranch.

BW Did they get newspapers and magazines?

DF Oh yeah, subscribe to newspapers, and then again they had a big old box in Magdalena Post Office. It wouldn't hold all the mail. They wouldn't get it - what'd we say? Every other month? The papers were, lot of time, history by the time we read 'em.

BW So you had to go all the way to Magdalena for mail?

DF Yeah, until - I don't know when they changed to Datil, maybe in the '50s.

BW How long did it take to get to Magdalena?

DF Well it's 68 miles so...well they'd go in a car or a pickup and probably drive 45 or 50 miles an hour for 68 miles, so that's how long it took. As far, as I can remember, my own memory's that it was always paved from Magdalena to Datil, and on it was just dirt from here to highway 60. And it'd get pretty washboard.

BW When did you get radio or TV?

DF Well, we had radio since Edison or whoever invented it I guess. String up aials and get a little bit of scrambled static, and I know my father had a TV in '57.

BW Did you visit with friends or have them over to play at the house?

DF Oh yeah, there'd be visits between McCrackens and us, and Weltys, and uh, just various neighbors.

BW Who were your closest neighbors?

DF Oh well, that'd vary with time, but Harriets, Adobe Ranch, the Y Ranch..

BW And who was at the Adobe and Y at that time?

DF Well they had various owners, more recently J. J. Carrejo over here. He's only, oh I don't know, three or four miles over here. Y Ranch and Harriets, they were both about 15 miles away, and then actually we're even closer to Horse Springs, that's only 11 miles or so. Abe Sanchez, he's our neighbor, maybe six miles...

COURTSHIP

BW Did anybody marry their neighbors' kids around here? Or did they usually marry someone from a long way away?

DF Well, Mike Harriet married one of Odell Emery's daughters, so they were neighbors. I imagine several other local people married neighbors, that's the first one I think of you know.

BW How did you meet your wife?

DF At a rodeo.

BW And where was she from?

DF Well, she's born in Minnesota but she's raised on various Indian reservations 'cause her father worked for the Indian Service. She can tell ya, Chinle and Lucachuca, and names I can't even pronounce.

BW You just saw each other or...?

DF Oh I don't know, she's just fascinated by my good looks..[laughter]..kept followin' me around.

BW And so eventually you just stopped and talked to her...

DF Kind of like that...

BW What would be a typical date?

DF I don't know. We'd go to drive-in movies--that was still a big deal then--and different bars and dances, and that was it.

I followed up later to get Karen's take on how they met:

BW So we heard the story of how you'all met and we wondered if you remembered it the same. It was at a rodeo, and he said you just noticed how good lookin' he was and started followin' him around.

Karen Farr (KF) Well that's pretty close. I worked at Oden Chevrolet on 4th Street [in Albuquerque], and the courthouse--that's right across the street from it. And I guess they bought a '56 car, '55 4-wheel drive pickup...you know they didn't have 4-wheel drives back then; Jeep was the only one. But they custom did a Chevy.

DF Put a kit under ‘em, make a 4-wheel...

KF And they had a winch, a big winch, put on the front. And they still have that same winch; it’s on, of course, another pickup, but it really lasted, and it made all the difference in the world. We never had a four wheel drive until 1979, here at our house. They had one over at the homestead. Over at the Crawford, at the headquarters. But we had that winch on the front of a regular pickup, and we went everywhere, and didn’t have any trouble.

Well anyway, that’s where I saw him first. And I noticed him right away, with his hat and all. And I worked in the front office, but then when he’d come to pick up the vehicle, I’d run back and take care of him...you know, to give him the receipt and get the money. Anyway, when they’d bring a truck in for service... The office was right in the middle and you’d drive in one side to get it repaired or whatever, write the ticket, and then when you picked it up you’d drive out the other side, but anyway, I could see ‘im when they drove in, and that’s how... Anyhow, a friend of the Farris managed the used car department. And one time I had to take some papers from the office over to the used car department, and I went in and I was just flabbergasted because Dave was in there visitin’ with this old friend that worked there at Oden’s also, and he introduced us, but nothing ever came of that. And then finally in ’56 went to the Los Alamos—I used to run barrels at the rodeos. My girlfriend Rosemary O’Neill and I, after the rodeo, went and got all spruced up to go to the dance. That’s where I *really* met him. The dance. Then, from there on I was hooked, but I didn’t think I had ‘im caught yet [laughter].

But anyway, later on they were getting ready to go on the driveway—it was in October, the first part of October, and this Rosemary and I were at the dance at the State Fair in Albuquerque, and he had been kicked, terrible, on one leg... And anyway, his mother made his brother Ed take him in to the doctor to have it checked out; he was on crutches. Anyway, he did call and we went to a movie I think, and visited, and then after they went on the driveway he came up one night and visited, went to a movie, and he went back and that was when they shipped cattle, the next morning. And from then on I think I saw him, oh, I know I got 13 letters from him. We met in August and got married in February. So I chased him ‘til I caught ‘im. If you count every time I saw him it was seven times. And then we got married in February of the next year, of ’57. And then later on that year the drouth was broken. So we take credit for that!

BW I think you should!

KF Yeah, we got married in February, and in July, I’ll tell you, it really rained, and tore up a lot of country in the hills because you know, there wasn’t any grass. And those arroyos ran and boy, we fixed water gaps that year. You wouldn’t believe. And right there at the house, at the old ranch where we lived, there were five water gaps, right by where the pastures came in to the ranch house for water. And every time it would rain we’d have to fix those five water gaps, plus other places on the ranch. But that was right there at the house. It got kind of tiresome after a while. But then it was really good. The grass really grew and George, Dave’s father, was amazed that it came back so quick, you know, after being dry for so long, that the grass really came back.

And that hay pasture canyon, or Patterson cutoff, they used to cut grama hay there for years. But in '57 it made a big arroyo through that pasture. It still had grama grass, but it sure washed that canyon out pretty bad. You used to be able to leave here and just drive up to that old ranch. It's 15 miles from where Dave and I live I think. And it wouldn't take you too long, because you'd go through one gate to get there and you could just drive; the road was good. And the same on the other side, Shaw Canyon. It just washed it out and it got where, you know, you had to fix the road every time you went up, and it took you three or four times as long to get from the headquarters up to either side of the ranch because of the washouts. And I don't think any of this bothered the Driveway, simply because it was mostly flat. There wasn't arroyos in it until you got close to Magdalena, that I remember.

DF Back at Los Alamos rodeo, you had to go up there and sign a bunch of papers, tell how many teeth your grandmother had, and swear you weren't a communist and everything, just to get in to the facility to rope...

MM And they let *you* in???? [laughter]

DF Well I'm surprised they let *her* in!

DF Oh, they let a bunch of thugs in there really, but they didn't have any foreign interests you know. I wonder if it's still that way.

MM It wasn't until the mid '70s where you could...if you weren't connected to the lab they'd let you live in Los Alamos. And so, I know within the community they opened up restrictions. I want to say it was like '74 when they finally let other people live there. Yeah, 'cause I heard the history, and they were lookin' for a place to do the development and they picked that because there was one road in and one road out, you could control everything. I guess it stayed that way until the mid '70s. If you were working at the lab and didn't have the clearance you'd have to leave Los Alamos after your shift.

DF I remember that was kind of a big deal, signin' in there. A lot of questions and...they had a good rodeo up there.

MM Actually that kind of surprises me, the way that community was back then. I figured they didn't know what a horse was.

DF That was in the '50s you know, and that wasn't too far after the end of World War II.

MEDICAL CARE

BW Where was the closest doctor?

DF Well, Socorro. Well, way back there they had a doctor in Magdalena. Everybody claimed he was no good until he was drunk, and then he was pretty good [laughter]! I know I heard that

my father jumped on a horse bareback and went clear over, and hit on his wrists and dislocated both of 'em. So they took 'im - they didn't know what was wrong - and they took 'im to Magdalena. And the doctor looked 'im over and said well, take 'im home and soak his wrists in coal oil or vinegar, one or the other. So he had crooked wrists all his life. The coal oil didn't put 'em back in joint. So it wasn't worth the trip, huh [laughter]?

MM Yeah, my dad had a sister - he was the oldest - and she came down with tonsillitis. And they took her to a hospital there in Lubbock. And when they got her tonsils out they shoved him in the same room and said "well we're here, so we'll take yours out too." They didn't want to make another trip to town in case he ever got sick, so it was like, we might as well get you both taken care of.

DF And how much did the room cost?

MM Compared to what you paid it's a whole lot cheaper! [of Mr. Farr's recent illness]

DF Well, we've got a receipt where I had my tonsils removed in say, 1937? The bill for a day and a night in the hospital was \$14. Over here at Lubbock today, the room costs you \$1200. Somethin's really wrong there.

EDUCATION

DF And that's another thing, I read it but it's kind of a story that - you know before statehood they'd send a congressman out to go through the state and see if they wanted to let New Mexico become a state. Well, they said all there is out there--well what they thought is--robbers and Billy the Kids, and Mexicans that don't speak English, and Indians. This congressman made the rounds and he ended up in Santa Fe, and talked to the superintendant of schools for the territory, and he thought the guy didn't really have a good education, so he tested him a little and he said "When did George Washington die?" And the superintendant said, "Well hell, I didn't even know he was sick!" [laughter] So, we didn't become a state that year.

BW What school did you go to in Albuquerque?

DF Who cares where I went to school? But I did learn to play pool and smoke cigarettes there, that's about it. Coronado. And Lincoln, and Albuquerque High School.

BW After high school, did you want to go on to college?

DF No!

BW How did your parents feel about education?

DF They said "You can go to school or come to work." I came to work.

RELIGION

BW Did you go to church?

DF Church? I was in Sunday school every day of my life in Albuquerque.

BW But when you were on the ranch you didn't?

DF Last time I've been in a church was - other than funerals - was 1951. But I consider myself a Christian, just that - I went to school with the deacon's boy and the preacher's boy, and they both ended up in prison, so it isn't really a necessity to go to church I don't think.

BW Did your family attend church, and if so, where was the nearest church?

DF Naw, they didn't really attend church, probably before they were married maybe, but...long trip to a church out here.

BW Magdalena was the closest church?

DF Oh, they had a Catholic church over here at Horse Springs.

BW But you guys weren't Catholics?

DF Protestant. Presbyterian. My grandmother was very religious and read the Bible every day. She had arthritis real bad, and even livin' in Albuquerque she couldn't get to church.

BW Were there any circuit riding ministers that would go around and preach?

DF Oh yeah. Yeah, we had one of them speak at my grandmother's funeral.

BW And where was the funeral?

DF Albuquerque. She had to live there because of her heart trouble.

POLITICS

BW Was your family active in local, state, or national politics?

DF Well, we always voted, and my mother was a pretty constant judge during elections. At Horse Springs, when we used to vote there...

BW Was there anybody in the area who was considered a community leader?

DF Hell, Juan Carrejo, he was the most intelligent fella' around I guess. J. J.'s father. He was a pretty intelligent man. My grandfather was the president of the woolgrowers. But my father, well you know, a lot of those people that hold offices in the cattlegrowers, that's their deal. It's very competitive among those families. We'd always go to the cattlegrowers' meetings, but not for political reasons.

BW Do you know how long he was president of the woolgrowers?

DF Well, sometime in the 20s, until he died. He died while he was in office.

BW When did he die?

DF 1927

NEIGHBORS

BW Over time, did many neighbors leave, and if so, do you know why?

DF Well, in more recent times, you know the Lees over here...old time ranchin' families...the estate tax put 'em out of business. And the other neighbors, the Harriets have been pretty permanent. Carrejos and Emerys. Then there's these ranches that are kind of speculative. People'd lease 'em and be gone, but they weren't really neighbors, they were just runnin' cattle for a while.

CHANGES

BW What had the greatest impact on grazing in your lifetime?

DF Hmm. I don't know - been a lot of things. They used to be old dirt tanks out here, and boy, the badgers'd dig under 'em and you'd better be there a pumpin' the holes shut, and steel tanks and Aeromotor windmills, and trucks - which brought diseases - the drouth of the '50s, those were all big, either for good or for bad. They started vaccinatn' for black leg pretty early, and then boy, after these diseases come in on the trucks, that's why it was givin' 'em everything known to mankind after a while. Roy's got it pretty well ironed out now and shoot, that damn government, for a while they'd make a...there's a name for it...I forgot it now. But each feed lot has its own special disease, so vetinary'd get that pinned down and mix up a batch of medicine that would fit that feed lot - send it to us - we'd vaccinate 'em. Hardly any death loss. And then, government found they were mixin' it up in a bathtub or somethin' and stopped it. Had to have FDA approved drugs and everything, and it's taken years to get that down to where we've about got it whipped. That's why we can make that all natural...but if they get antibiotics in the feed lot, get sick, they're out.

BW Do you think the quality of life on the ranch is better or worse than in the old days?

DF Better in the old days, I imagine. Well, I can look back to when I was 20, 30 years old and it was damn sure better then than now. Now you've got all this quick transportation down the freeway, but, you've got a lot more worries today. We can't sleep at night because of estate tax. We've made them (lawyers) independently rich, with accountants just trying to figure out how to come out even. They aren't all so smart, yeah. Well, if the IRS don't understand it themselves, how you gonna get anybody that does, and the big deal today is all this housing development. So they'll come in and appraise a ranch at housing development prices, and ain't no way in the world anybody could pay the taxes, so put a little note at the bottom. We'll be out of business when Dave and Karen die. Or maybe not; the housing market has been killed here recently. But still, it's worth a lot more than grazing land.

BW What do you think the future holds for ranching?

DF Very dismal. Due to--unless they can end that estate tax. Why, if you could get rid of that, why I think we - weather conditions permit - why, we've got a fairly bright future. If they can find some kind of fuel that can haul cattle and feed. There's a lot of gloomy pictures coming up here.

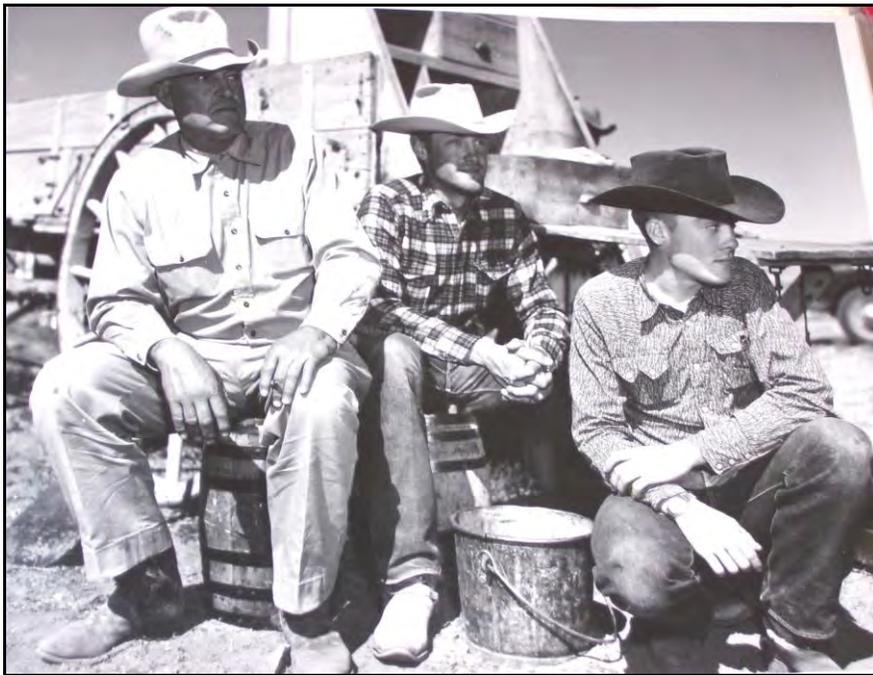
BACK TO THE PHOTO ALBUM



DF My father...



DF I think that's my father and Johnny Greenwald.



DF That's at the New Well. My father, myself and my brother Ed.

BW That's a nice photograph!

DF Well, those are some what's-his-name took, the professional photographer. Harvey Caplin.



DF You can see Magdalena Peak, the mountain with the head on it. I remember my mother telling me that kids would go up to that face and kind of vandalize it, kind of throw the rocks around and everything, and it's not near as clear as it used to be. I think it's still fairly well defined, but it used to be more definite.

BW I sure appreciate all the information from both of you.

KF Well, I can't believe that this is happening. We do get the Mountain Mail, and we sure were disappointed when they said that they were gonna close their doors, and it was really nice to find out that somebody got it and, you know, followin' through.