

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mrs. W.B. Oldham

February 27, 1973

Transcribed by Rhonda Robinson

Eastern New Mexico University Oral History Program

- Burroughs : This is Mrs. John Burroughs. Today is February 27, 1973. I'm speaking to Mrs. W.B. Oldham in Roosevelt General Hospital. I'm speaking to her about the part that the U.D.C. chapter of Portales played in obtaining a salute to the state flag of New Mexico.
- Mrs. Oldham : You can sit in that chair. You can find it in the State's minutes.
- Burroughs : Well, I know that but I wanted you to tell me yourself. You were the president of U.D.C. that year and I wanted you to tell me how you -- how did you work up this salute to the state flag within your group? Who made the wording of it? Do you remember that?
- Mrs. Oldham : Well we sent in a -- to him, what we wanted and what we had.
- Burroughs : Well, now who was it that made the wording?
- Mrs. Oldham : Now, that was in January and the state legislature meeting, next January or February, now this was in December or about before the legislature met. They always did, that go through the legislature. And Mr. Fred Boone, he was one of the legislators.
- Burroughs : He presented the bill. He presented the bill.
- Mrs. Oldham : The legislator and then it is passed by the State, and that's how it come and we put it in our minutes of the flag.
- Burroughs : The Ellen Jones chapter of the U.D.C.?
- Mrs. Oldham : Yes, Ellen Jones chapter of the U.D.C.
- Burroughs : Here in Portales?

- Mrs. Oldham : In Portales.
- Burroughs : Can you tell me the words of the state salute?
- Mrs. Oldham : Can I tell you the words what?
- Burroughs : Can you tell me the words of the salute that you had Mr. Boone present?
- Mrs. Oldham : Well, I can't do it right now, because I don't have it.
- Burroughs : Well, wasn't it, "We salute..."
- Mrs. Oldham : Everything I have, all of me is packed away since I have been in this hospital.
- Burroughs : Yes, well, can you say it with me? "We salute the flag of the state of New Mexico, the zia symbol of perfect friendship..."
- Mrs. Oldham : Now, wait a minute, I didn't get that at first...
- Burroughs : "... the zia symbol of perfect friendship among united cultures," is that right?
- Mrs. Oldham : We prepared this... ready to go into the state legislature... because it had to go through that, and we'd be in getting it ready and everything and then send it to him and he was the legislator.
- Burroughs : Well, did you know that some of the women's club over the state used that salute to the flag? The Portales Women's club uses that salute to the flag to open every meeting. Do you remember that?
- Mrs. Oldham : That the women did what?
- Burroughs : The Portales Women's club uses that salute to the flag to open every meeting. Do you remember that?
- Mrs. Oldham : Yes.
- Burroughs : Do you remember saying that when you were able to attend... you and Mrs. Christoe, Mrs. Christoe?

- Mrs. Oldham : Well, you know it has been so long.
- Burroughs : Yes it has.
- Mrs. Oldham : I had the committee, prepare the words and everything.
- Burroughs : Do you remember who the committee was?
- Mrs. Oldham : No, if I had my book about that year it would show just exactly the committee.
- Burroughs : Well, I will get someone that is in the chapter now to read it to me out of the minutes. I will get someone in the chapter to read it to me out of the minutes, but I wanted to talk to you and have you tell me about it, because I knew that you were the one who started...
- Mrs. Oldham : But the committee, they formed the words and everything and I put it through the legislature.
- Burroughs : Well, I wanted your part in that.
- Mrs. Oldham : ...Now, Mr. Fred Boone...
- Burroughs : Now doesn't the U. D. C. chapter put the flags on the graves in the cemetery on Memorial Day?
- Mrs. Oldham : Yes, they do decoration out there as long... at that time, but I don't know anything about it know.
- Burroughs : They used to though, you used to do that.
- Mrs. Oldham : Put the flags out there?
- Burroughs : On the graves.
- Mrs. Oldham : On the graves, yes, a lot of them do, always did as far as I know.
- Burroughs : And you used to do that yourself?
- Mrs. Oldham : Huh?
- Burroughs : Did you ever do that yourself?
- Mrs. Oldham : No.
- Burroughs : No, you don't recall that. Do you recall something about your

husband's paintings? I know there is going to be an exhibit at the library, pretty soon. Can you tell me something about his paintings?

Mrs. Oldham : Well, yes, he painted ever since he was a little kid, he used to follow his mother around and paint when he was a baby. Draw and stay right with her and then I don't really recall...

Burroughs : He always painted?

Mrs. Oldham : He liked it, and he could draw alot of things and all the features are his ideas what he has made, his own ideas, and I think... oh I lost (unclear), I didn't even know they had a picture.

Burroughs : There is some of his pictures in the Eastern New Mexico Library right now. Did you know that? There is one of a woman, an Indian woman, standing by the Taos Pueblos. It's a rather large picture . Do you recall that?

Mrs. Oldham : I think that my sister, she put that picture... idea to put that picture since I've a ... well they were packing my things away and getting them all together to store and so she phoned and asked just what will I do with that. And I said well I don't know either ...and she said I don't think the childrens department, we might leave it there and that a picture of an Indian girl standing...

Burroughs : By the Taos Pueblos?

Mrs. Oldham : Well I remember... that was in our house all the time. Well I tell you he had some pictures about four feet by three feet.

Burroughs : How old are you, Mrs. Oldham?

Mrs. Oldham : I'll be 95 pretty soon.

Burroughs : When is your birthday?

Mrs. Oldham : Well, I... the 20th of July, Don't put that in the paper.

Burroughs : No, I'm not. Twentieth of July.

Mrs. Oldham : Huh?

Burrough : You don't look it.

Mrs. Oldham : Oh!

Burroughs : Mrs. Eunice Compton, daughter of Mrs. Oldham, has ...a... gotten the papers that her mother referred to and will read the events and activities leading up to the getting of the state salute. Mrs. Compton would you read that?

Mrs. Compton : Mrs. Burroughs, if you don't mind, if you would permit me, I would like to precede that by saying that mother served as New Mexico Director of the Jefferson-Davis highway number 80, which is now interstate Number 10. She began her work in 1938 by selling Jefferson-Davis highway maps, and she is still the Jefferson-Davis although she is not active. She directed the erection of five U.D.C. historical markers on this highway, which is between Anthony and southern New Mexico, and the New Mexico-Arizona boundary line. She planned programs for the unveiling of the markers and conducted the ceremonies. Perhaps, the accomplishments in which mother takes the most pride, is he part on the committee in helping get an official salute to the beautiful New Mexico flag. Prior to 1963, on two occasions as state director of the Jefferson-Davis highway, mother while preparing dedicatory programs for new historical highway markers found a need for a salute to the New Mexico flag. She believed that after 50 years of statehood, January 6, 1912 to 1962, New Mexico certainly needed an official salute to the flag. On November 6, 1962, after she gave her annual Jefferson-Davis highway report, she recommended in a chapter meeting that the Ellen W. Jones chapter prepare a salute and sponsor a resolution for it's adoption by the state legislature which was to convene January 9, 1963. The chapter approved her recommendation and voted for her to chose a committee to carry it out. Mrs. T.K.

Martin was president, and on that committee: Mrs. T.E. Mears Jr. and Mrs. James T. Turner served with mother. They drafted a resolution requesting the Roosevelt county legislators to introduce and work for appropriate legislation to establish an official salute to the flag in New Mexico, with the following salute recommended for consideration: "I salute the flag of the state of New Mexico, the zia symbol of perfect friendship among united cultures."

Mother's files contained certain interesting correspondences which traces the history of House Bill No. 258, that state representative Fred Boone introduced, including the U.D.C.'s recommended salute to the flag. State Senator R.C. Morgan and State representative Alva J. Parker gave their support and the legislature approved the bill on March 13, 1963. Governor Jack M. Campbell signed the bill and later sent the Ellen W. Jones chapter a letter expressing appreciation for their successful campaign during the 26th legislature and having a law passed which gives us a salute to the flag of New Mexico. He also congratulated the chapter for their interest in state government. Senator Morgan stated in his congratulations to the Portales chapter that when he placed the bill on passage, he read the salute and then yielded to Senator Tibo Chavez, who read it in Spanish. He commented on the various cultures in New Mexico. Then he yielded to Senator Amaio from Gallup and suggested he give it in Navajo, however, he declined as he said his Navajo wasn't too good. I'm not sure I pronounced his name correctly, A-M-A-I-O.

Burroughs : That looks like it will be alright. But it did include the Anglo, Spanish and Indian culture which are which are the united cultures.

Mrs. Compton : That's right.

Burroughs : Your mother was very active in other areas too, Mrs. Compton, would you comment on those?

Mrs. Compton : Well, one of her first loves, you might say, is the work of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and she has served in several capacities in that organization and she has received several citations. Mrs. Alferd Burningham, the national president of U.D.C. , in 1968 presented her with a certificate of honor commending her as dean of all U.D.C. registrars, for her five decades of service in the Ellen W. Jones chapter, and for outstanding work as a director of the Jefferson-Davis highway in New Mexico. In 1969, she received a certificate of merit from the New Mexico Division for faithful and devoted service, which was presented by Mrs. Bernice Cox, who was at that time vice-president of the New Mexico Division. She has also received a plaque from her own Ellen W. Jones chapter commending her for her work she has done in this chapter.

Burroughs : Well, that's a very significant record and I'm glad to add that to the salute to the flag and the other things that she has done.

Mrs. Compton : There is one project that she has not completed... she would like to have a confederate cannon placed in the U.D.C. cemetery. You know, this is the only cemetery in the state that has its own U.D.C. cemetery circle. And she has been trying to locate information about one of the unknown number of cannons buried in the vicinity or and south of Albuquerque after the Battle of Battle Val verde. When General (unclear) became his major (unclear) Ramon Teal buried their cannons as they retreated , some had been dug up and put in various places including two in Old Town in Albuquerque. She hopes that she can locate one

of the cannons and that will complete another dream...

**Burroughs** : That she had, well that's very significant and I know that you are proud of her record. Thank you so much Mrs. Compton, this has been a nice addition to your mother's interview. Do you release these statements and the ones made by your mother for the Oral History Program at Eastern New Mexico University?

**Mrs. Compton** : I'm proud to do so.

**Burroughs** : Thanks a lot. This is Mrs. Burroughs concluding the interview with Mrs. Eunice Compton, daughter of Mrs. W.B. Oldham, who gave the information concerning the salute to the State flag of New Mexico, February 27, 1973.