

Maria Rogers Oral History Program
Summary/Transcript of OH 0084

Interviewee: Mr. and Mrs. George Abila
Interviewee Date of Birth: George: April, 1908.
Interview Date: January 20, 1978
Interviewer: Jessie Velez Lehmann
Transcriber: Susan Becker

(This interview goes in and out of being in English and Spanish. I was able to get the gist of some of the parts that are in Spanish, but all of them need further translation--SB)

[A].

000 George's parents were born in Huerfano County. His father was born March 18, 1869. His name was Juan Santos Abila. His mother was born April 15, 1885. Her name was Maria Cruz Rodriguez. George doesn't remember much about his grandparents.

030 Father bought his ranch from a bank; it was not homesteaded. Doesn't remember when that was. There was a log house on the property, which is where George was born. Later, when George was about 8, his father built an adobe addition to the house. There was no indoor plumbing. They got electricity after George was married, in about 1932 or 1933. George was born in April of 1908, also in Huerfano County.

070 Going to school: the school was a big, old adobe house. The school was in one or two rooms, but there was only one teacher. The teachers only spoke English, except for when he was in the fourth grade, when there was a Spanish-speaking teacher. When he started school he could not speak English. Even when he finished school, the eighth grade, he did not feel that he could speak English adequately. To continue after eighth grade you had to travel 38 miles.

140 When he was in school there were about 75 students in the school (from first through eighth grades). Most of them were Spanish-speaking. He only remembers two American families. All the books were in English. (Section in Spanish that I didn't understand.)

212 (This section is in Spanish: After finishing school, George worked on the ranch with his father. What they grew on the ranch.) Whatever was not sold went to the mill to be made into flour. His father also raised hogs and sheep and cattle; he fed the rest of the grain to the animals. George only remembers one Indian man, Antonio, who used to stay with his family (?). His family had a herd of about 175 sheep. They had another 640 acres up in the mountains, where they would take the sheep in the summer. He and his brother would take turns taking care of the sheep up in the hills. George was up in the hills with the sheep when Antonio died.

275 George tells about his brothers, half-brothers and sisters.

295 George married in 1930. He says that they didn't suffer from the Depression because they

were on the farm. They raised their own wheat, meat and milk. They did not have any money, though. (Rest of this section is in Spanish--didn't understand enough to translate.)

395 George had six children. The children were born at home, although a doctor came to the house when they were born. They talk about diseases that family members had.

460 George's children: five boys and one girl. The girl was the youngest. He lived in Huerfano County with them until 1952. The children all went to school in Chama through eighth grade, then went to high school in Walsenburg, except for Tom and Leann(?). They moved to Boulder in 1947 or 1948, when Tom was 13.

490 George moved from Huerfano County because the place was too small and there was too little water due to a drought. Their water rights were too far down for them to get steady water. They were unable to raise any grain, hardly any hogs. Instead of being able to raise their own grain and hay, they would have to buy some and therefore they couldn't make any profit, in fact, he was losing money. In 1942, he went into debt. When his brother died, his sister-in-law wanted to sell the brother's share to George. He didn't have the money to buy it. He went to the bank where they used to borrow money (section in Spanish that I didn't understand). The bank did loan him the money, which he used to buy all the machinery and animals, but not the land. But he would pay the taxes on the land and rent part of it. The land had been bought for \$400, then the timber on the land was sold for \$700. George gave his sister-in-law half of the money. Later, she sold her part of the land to a friend.

697 End of Side A

[B].

000 (Section in Spanish: discussion of leaving the Huerfano County and coming to Boulder; work in Boulder at a lumberyard for 18 years(?)--need help with translation)

070 He was a truck driver for about 2 months, after which they told him he was too good at working around the yard, so they put him to work in the yard. He had problems with guys who didn't want to work. George never had any problem getting a job.

104 George describes the one problem he had with discrimination. A man asked for a job. He was about 45 years old. George was about 5 or 6 years older than he was. When George went to work on Monday, the boss said, "Well, you've got a new man, you tell him what to do." The boss told the man, "This is George, he's the foreman, and whatever he tells you to do, that's it." The man worked for about two hours and then he took off. He told some of the other guys—the Americans—that he wasn't going to work under a Mexican, no Mexican was going to tell him what to do. He didn't take his lunch box or anything.

140 (When you came here, did you have any trouble buying your house?) "No problems. I went to a real estate man, and he took me different places and he showed me different places where the

houses was. Some of the houses I didn't like because it was too little houses (?). There was a nice big house down there on Cherryvale, and it had about four acres of land, and I sure wanted to buy that, but it was in kind of bad shape, and the boys said no, you worked long enough already. And then he came to this house and sold me this house and he said that the price was pretty high and he didn't say that I could buy it, but when I told him that I could give him \$6,000 down, well he said I think I could buy it. And I bought the house. No trouble."

160 (Tell me about the neighborhood.) No discrimination. "They treat me just as good as anybody else." (Did you ever visit with each other, in each other's houses?) "Not really, no, we never did." George did yard work for many of the old people in the neighborhood. When George retired, one of his neighbors asked him what he was going to do. George said he would do whatever he could find, and the neighbor asked if George could take care of his yard. George retired in 1973.

185 Religion. There was a church about two miles from where he lived in Huerfano County, which was where they went to church. The service was in Spanish. (Section in Spanish that needs translation. Part of this section is discussion about recreation in Huerfano County--rodeos, dances.)

275 What they do in Boulder--mostly they just go to church. Once in a while they might go to a dance, but mostly they don't go out much. (Spanish section: possible translation--(?)) Everyone in the family lives in Boulder, except for one son, who lives in Broomfield, and their daughter, who lives in Denver. Everyone is employed; no one has ever been out of work.)

320 (Spanish section: things that they used for medicine(?))

375 Discussion of travel and work on the ranch in George's father's and grandfather's time, using horses (part English/part Spanish--needs translation.)

564 Discussion of the closeness of the family--always close, even after they came to Boulder. They also had a lot of friends outside the family. Tom (?) says that both his father and his grandfather taught him that "if you treat the people the way they are supposed to be treated, you are going to be treated equal-- sometimes you are going to have difficulties, but in the long run, if it takes a little bit one way or another, but the majority of the way, you are going to come out ahead. And that's one thing my dad always taught us when we was kids." His father was always fair, he didn't just defend his kids or the other person automatically. Tom says that his way of bringing up his kids has helped them communicate with people of both cultures ("this world" and "the other world.")

700 End of interview